2dartist.

Experimental Portraiture

Self-taught artist Raphaël Vicenzi showcases his innovative illustrations

+plus

• 10 of the best digital images
• **Drawing vivid illustrations**
• Create a light filled magical forest
• **and much more!**

I WON'T BOTHER EITHER

Editor's Letter

ANNIE MOSS
Junior Editor

2dartist is now on Facebook!

Welcome to *2dartist* issue 118!

Hello! Issue 118 is packed with the detailed works of Mat Miller, distinctive portraits from self-taught artist Raphaël Vicenzi and an interview with freelance illustrator Aldo Katayanagi.

In this month's tutorials, Oliver Odmark shows how to design a robot droid with human characteristics, and Mark Kolobaev demonstrates how to create sci-fi special effects with photo manipulation techniques. We also have another speed paint tutorial from Ioan Dumitrescu, and round off our air vehicles series with Maxime Delcambre's tutorial on motion blur.

Elsewhere we have 10 images to inspire your projects, and overviews from José Julián Londoño Calle and Amir Zand. Enjoy!

Contributors

ALDO KATAYANAGI
Aldo Katayanagi is a freelance illustrator based in the United States. He attended the School of Visual Arts, New York, where an instructor once told him: "You could be the next James Jean; I hated him too."

RAPHAËL VICENZI (AKA MYDEADPONY)
Raphaël Vicenzi, aka Mydeadpony, is a self-taught artist influenced by fashion, illustration, and street art. He aims to create vivid and beautiful images. He lives in Brussels, Belgium with his wife and child.

MAT MILLER
Mat Miller is an illustrator from Bristol, UK, creating work based on the natural world. He illustrates primarily for the action sports industry but licenses his work for a variety of different products.

IOAN DUMITRESCU
Ioan Dumitrescu is a freelance concept artist from Romania. He recently worked on projects for Sony and Blur, and his work has featured in games, commercials and on book covers.
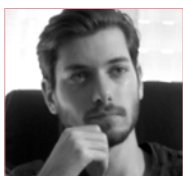
MAXIME DELCAMBRE
Maxime Delcambre is a freelance environment concept artist based in Paris, working for film and game companies. He mixes software and techniques to quickly achieve the best result possible.

MARK KOLOBAEV
Mark Kolobaev is a freelance concept artist from Belgorod, Russia. He works with both 2D and 3D software, and regularly creates online CG courses and tutorials for www.elementcourses.com.

OLIVER ODMARK
Oliver Odmark is a London-based concept artist working for Rocksteady Ltd. He studied 3D graphics at Playground Squad in Falun, Sweden which introduced him to the videogame industry.

AMIR ZAND (SAN)
Amir Zand (San) is a freelance artist specializing in illustration and graphic design. He started his own studio in 2013, working on cover art and posters for books, games and movies.

JOSÉ JULIÁN LONDOÑO CALLE
José Julián Londoño Calle is a graphic designer and university lecturer. His projects include work for Xbox One, PS4, and educational videogames for the Ministry of Education, Columbia.

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We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: **annie@3dtotal.com**.
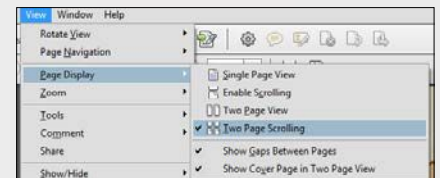
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Contents Issue 118

The Artist

Aldo Katayanagi
aldo-art.com

Interviewed by:
Jess Serjent-Tipping

Aldo Katayanagi is a freelance illustrator. He attended the School of Visual Arts, New York, where an instructor once told him: 'You could be the next James Jean; I hated him too'.

Drawing vivid illustrations

After a late entrance into the art world Aldo Katayanagi has developed an intriguing style which has seen him work on book, card game and television projects.
See his work here ▶

Unlike most artists whose fascination with art begins in childhood, Aldo Katayanagi, originally from Chicago, did not begin painting until adulthood. However this late start to his artistic life does not seem to have disadvantaged Aldo, who has now developed a successful career as a freelance illustrator.

Working mainly on projects for books and card games, Aldo is heavily influenced by film and the works of artists such as James Jean. His work has a distinctive, ethereal quality which has developed from the often fluid lines of his drawings and a tendency for lustrous colors.

He works mainly in 2D, although Aldo is also experienced in some 3D software such as Maya, ZBrush and KeyShot. By expanding his skills Aldo has developed his portfolio to include not only illustrations but also character concepts, matte painting and environment design.

This month Aldo talks to 2dartist about his workflow, his recognizable style and life as a freelance illustrator.

2dartist: Hi Aldo, thanks for chatting with us today. Firstly, could you tell us more about yourself and your career so far?

Aldo Katayanagi: I grew up in Chicago and moved to New York for college. I didn't start painting until I was 20, so I felt like I got a late start artistically and threw myself into it. I got my first art job a week after graduating and thought I had it all figured out. Months passed until my second one.

Since then I've done mostly book and card game work, with recent concept and environment work for a television project that is in development.

2da: Who or what are your biggest inspirations as an artist?

AK: I haven't thought much about specific influences recently because I've been trying to solve creative problems my own way and develop something more personalized. Jon Foster, Andrew Jones, James Jean, and Dave McKean come to mind as significant and recurring influences.

As stylistically unusual as my pieces tend to be, film taught me a lot of early lessons about visual language and how to design lighting, composition, and mood. I wanted to be a director long before I ever started drawing.

2da: Which tools and software do you use, and why do you like to use them?

AK: Most of my time is spent in Photoshop. I have to paint my sketches, and working digitally lets me quickly run through many concepts and variations. But getting to the painting stage requires preparation by means of photography, model building, CGI, and frequent pacing around the room.

I'm always looking for new techniques and the conceptual possibilities they make available. For instance, last week's project involved cartographic tools and satellite imagery. Next week's project probably won't, but my artistic toolkit is a bit larger than it was before.

2da: Could you describe to us your typical workflow?

AK: I spend a lot of time considering the initial concept. For me, a piece needs some kind of narrative or character hook, or there isn't any real reason to do it. Even an action scene needs something to make a viewer connect to it. The concepts of my experimental pieces might get a bit more abstract and inscrutable, but they're still there informing my decisions.
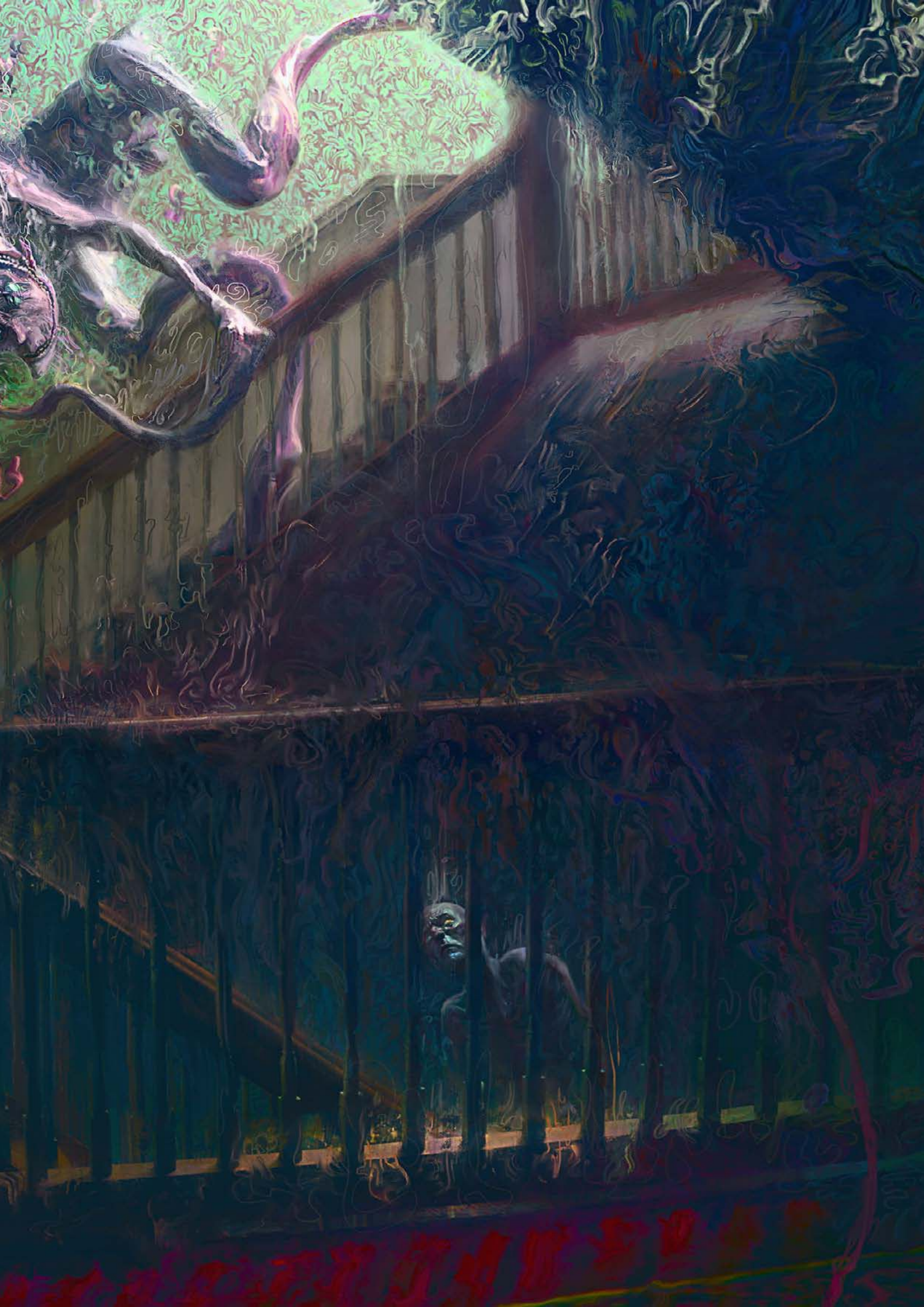
I scribble thumbnails, scan them, and paint my sketches digitally. With a clearer understanding of the scene, I start gathering and producing reference. Lighting is important to me, and well referenced ▶

● **This was an important transition in Aldo's workflow, and made him more comfortable with environments**

● *Motel* – a very filmic piece

lighting is always more believable and interesting than something made up. I take photos, create digital models, and go to finish.

2da: Which project (personal or professional) are you the proudest to have worked on, and what made it so special?

AK: I'm most proud of my personal series of what started as ghost paintings, but now might be more effectively described as psychedelic-neon-monster-things. They've been an exercise in following my creative instincts without a fear of failure.

It's invigorating to not know what's going to happen next. I'm as surprised as anyone else when I look at the finished image. I think they've made me a more confident and able artist.

I didn't set out to make these with any kind of lofty purpose, but in retrospect I realize they were all made during unpleasant moments and probably helped me deal with them.

2da: You have a distinct style which is often instantly recognizable – but how did you develop this signature style?

AK: I had originally intended to be a straightforward sci-fi/fantasy artist, but my senior year of college put me on a much more experimental path. The final year of school isn't the ideal time for that ▶

● Semi-finalist in an ArtOrder Challenge
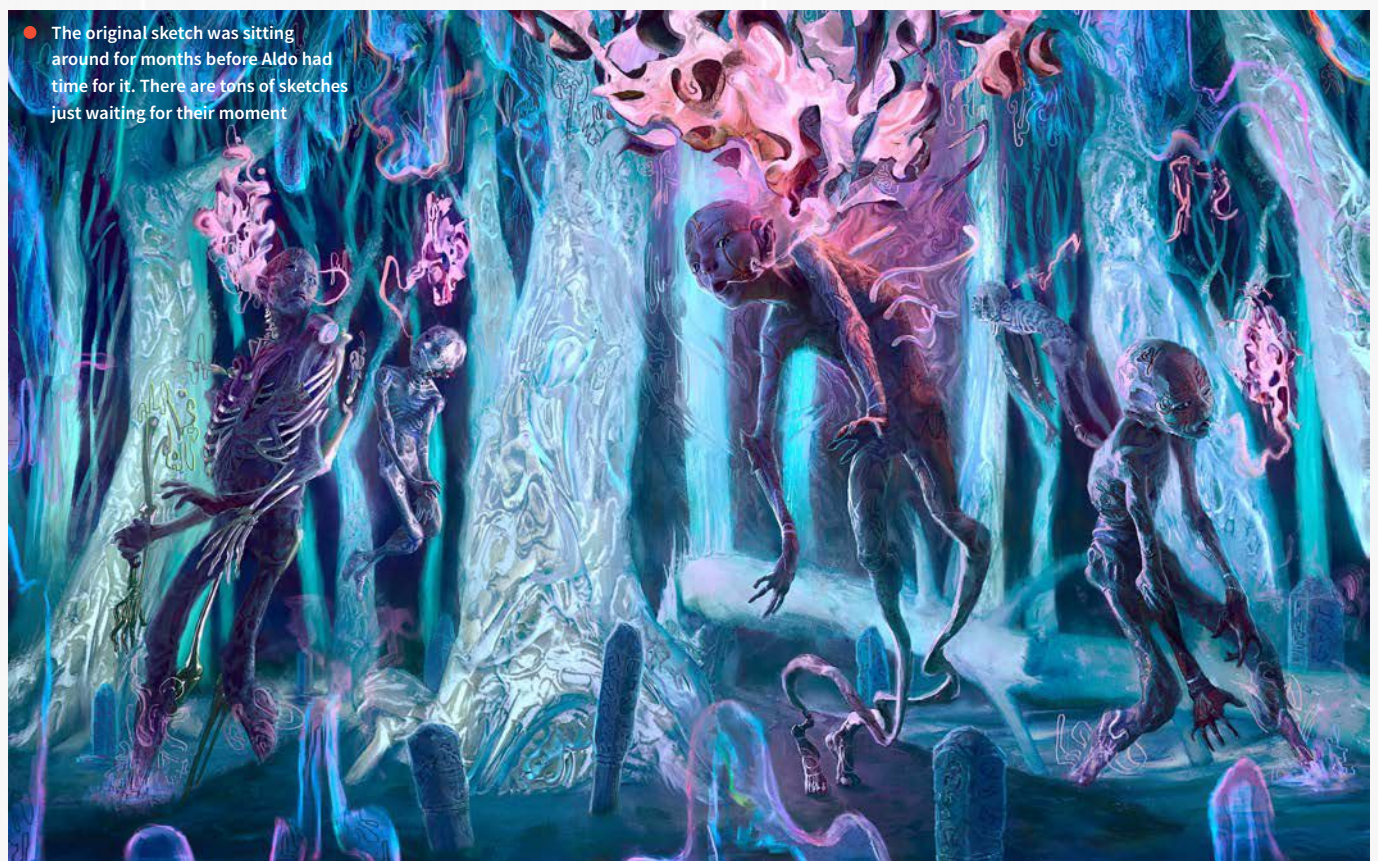
● The original sketch was sitting around for months before Aldo had time for it. There are tons of sketches just waiting for their moment

> **"It is also worth spending time learning the fundamentals, no matter how dull. And be more willing to take creative risks"**

kind of restructuring and reassessment, but taking the lessons learned from those artistic detours, and applying them to genre work, has resulted in something which is more distinctive that people respond to positively. In the past year artists I respect have started reaching out to me to praise my work, so I figure I'm doing some things right.

2da: What techniques, tools, or skills are you planning to work on next?

AK: I'm interested in exploring the procedural side of 3D and using it to bring more detailed and unpredictable elements to my surreal paintings.

My approach to my personal pieces has so many intuitive and spontaneous elements that I can't really describe what I have planned. There are vivid mental images, there are sketches, and eventually there will be paintings to show.

2da: What do you enjoy most about being a freelance illustrator? If you could offer a key piece of advice to artists hoping to pursue a career in the industry in general, what would it be?

AK: The freedom to structure my time as I see fit is a major draw for me. And every image comes with a new set of problems to solve, which keeps me engaged and motivated.

The most important, and most frequently stated, piece of advice is be persistent. It's not easy to actually do, and I've seen a number of art friends drop out entirely in the first few years. It is also worth spending time learning the fundamentals, no matter how dull. And be more willing to take creative risks, because I feel like I'm looking at the same six artists whenever I go on certain popular art sites.

2da: How do you spend your free time away from the demands and deadlines of the creative industry?

AK: I basically just paint and work out; and I don't work out enough! It's easy for freelancers to get chained to their desk, but I try to make time for life drawing sessions and gallery shows.

I think I might take a full day off next week, but just considering it makes me strangely uncomfortable. We'll see.

2da: Finally, what can we expect to see from you in the future?

AK: There are some early discussions for something involving the people I worked with on their Adult Swim projects. They've sent me what might be a design doc or a lunatic manifesto, I'm not sure yet.

I will be able to give updates as events warrant. In the meantime, I'll likely be focusing on card game art and similar genre work.

Thank you very much Aldo for taking time out of your busy schedule to take part in our interview! We really appreciate it. ●

● **Inspired by a love of costuming and** *D&D*

FRAMED

BY OTHERS

The Artist

Raphaël Vicenzi
mydeadpony.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Raphaël Vicenzi, aka Mydeadpony, is a self-taught artist whose works are influenced by fashion, illustration, street art and graffiti. He aims to create vivid and beautiful images, which are a reflection of his inner thoughts and mood. He lives in Brussels, Belgium with his wife and child.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Experimental portraiture

Mixing image and text, artist Raphaël Vicenzi creates vibrant, multi layered female portraits inspired by fashion, street art and graffiti ▶

Based in Brussels, Belgium, Raphaël Vicenzi's passion for art has driven him from amateur artist to professional freelance illustrator without the aid of a formal arts education. Inspired by a number of different art genres including street art, illustration and fashion, Raphaël has combined recognizable features from all these areas to create his own distinctive work.

Working on each image in a highly instinctive way, Raphaël experiments with different styles of text, splashes of vibrant color, line drawings, traditional effects and digital techniques. Paint splotches and graffiti are regular features of his work, which mixes the traditional with digital media. The artworks that emerge from his experimental processes are complex but not over embellished; often taking on a collage effect. His portraits are bold and yet they still retain a delicate style through the use of watercolor effects.

As a result of the individual style Raphaël has developed, he has been featured in a number of well known publications including the Taschen *100 Illustrators* reference book, *Illustration Now 3*. His work is also often used as feature illustrations in fashion and beauty magazines such as *Votre Beauté*, *Grazia* and *Company*.

This month Raphaël talks to 2dartist about making his own textures from traditional materials, and why allowing chaos into his work is so important to his success.

2dartist: Hello Raphaël! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

Raphaël Vicenzi: Hello! I am a self-taught illustrator living in Brussels, Belgium. I have been doing illustrations for the past 14 years or so and I've ▶
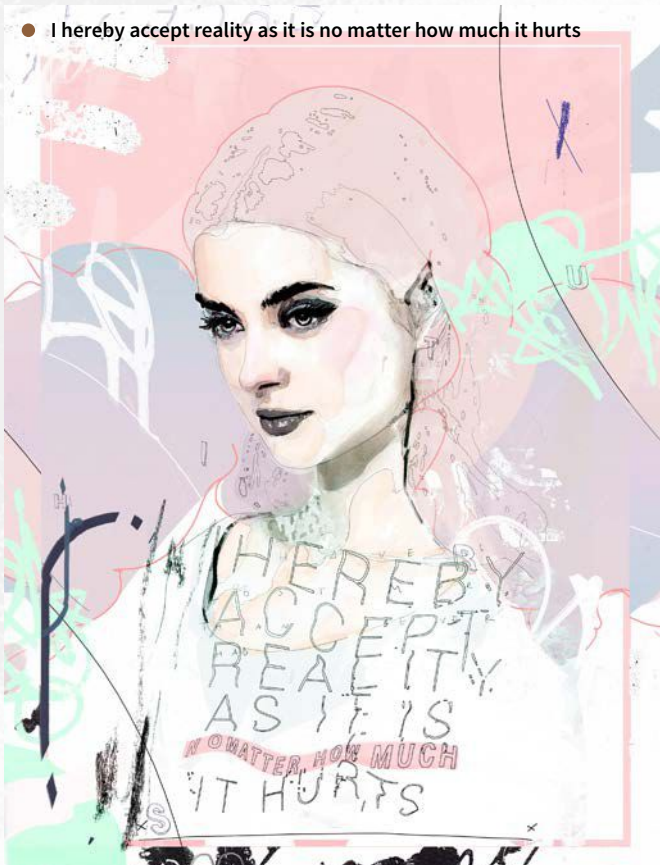
● **Break the curse**

● **Congratulations !!! It's a disaster!!!**

● **Freedom of Spleen**

● Here I dwell in various states of discomfort

● **I'd like to get a refund of my dreams**

● **I'd like to get a refund of my dreams**

● I hereby accept reality as it is no matter how much it hurts

● It's OK, I will carry your ghost everywhere I go

"Sometimes I just want to explore colors and shapes but I will always use a human figure in my works"

been working regularly for a wide variety of clients. I mainly do editorial illustrations for magazines with my illustration agency, Colagene. I also produce a lot of personal works which are women's portraits mixed with typography, street art and graphic design influences. I recently started to rekindle my love for dark and moody collages.

2da: Your works are a vibrant collection of multi-media portraits, how do you go about creating your works?

RV: I usually have an idea in mind, or at least a vague direction which reflects my own moods or state of mind. Sometimes I just want to explore colors and shapes but I will always use a human figure in my works. I simply work in Photoshop, using my own textures and brushes that I've created with acrylic paint, watercolors or markers.

I build my works layer by layer, experimenting with shapes, colors or typography. It's a very unconscious way of working, I add up layers, cut them up, and change the colors and so on until I start to find some kind of inner logic to the illustration which is hard to explain.

2da: As a self-taught artist what have you found has helped you most to develop your style?

RV: Not knowing exactly what I wanted to achieve in the first place! I had a vague idea because I was influenced by a great variety of artists, and tried to find a way to take each part that was interesting to me and make the kind of illustrations that would represent me. ▶

● Maybe it's the way it was supposed to be and there is nothing you can do about it now

● **No one Cares in pink**
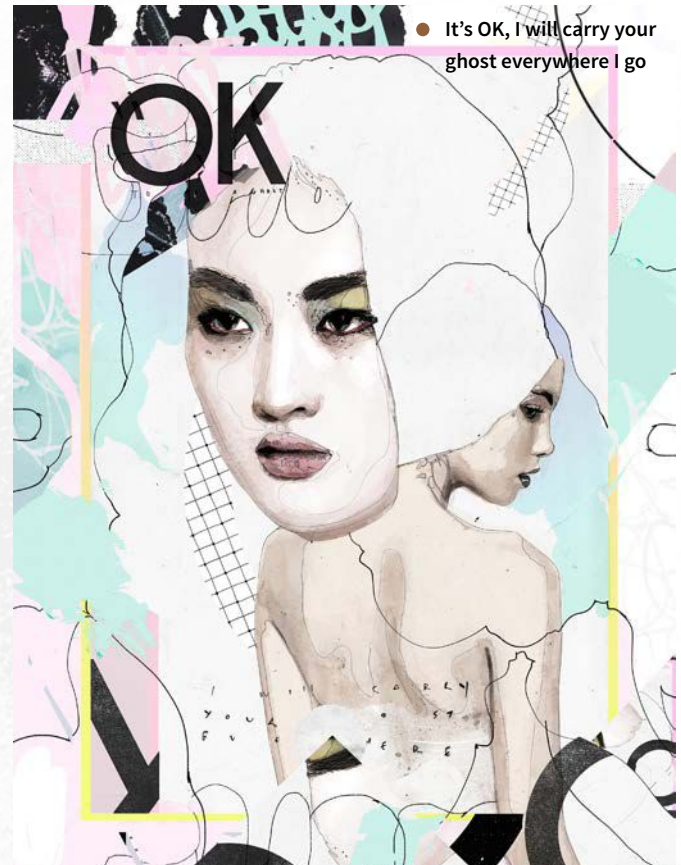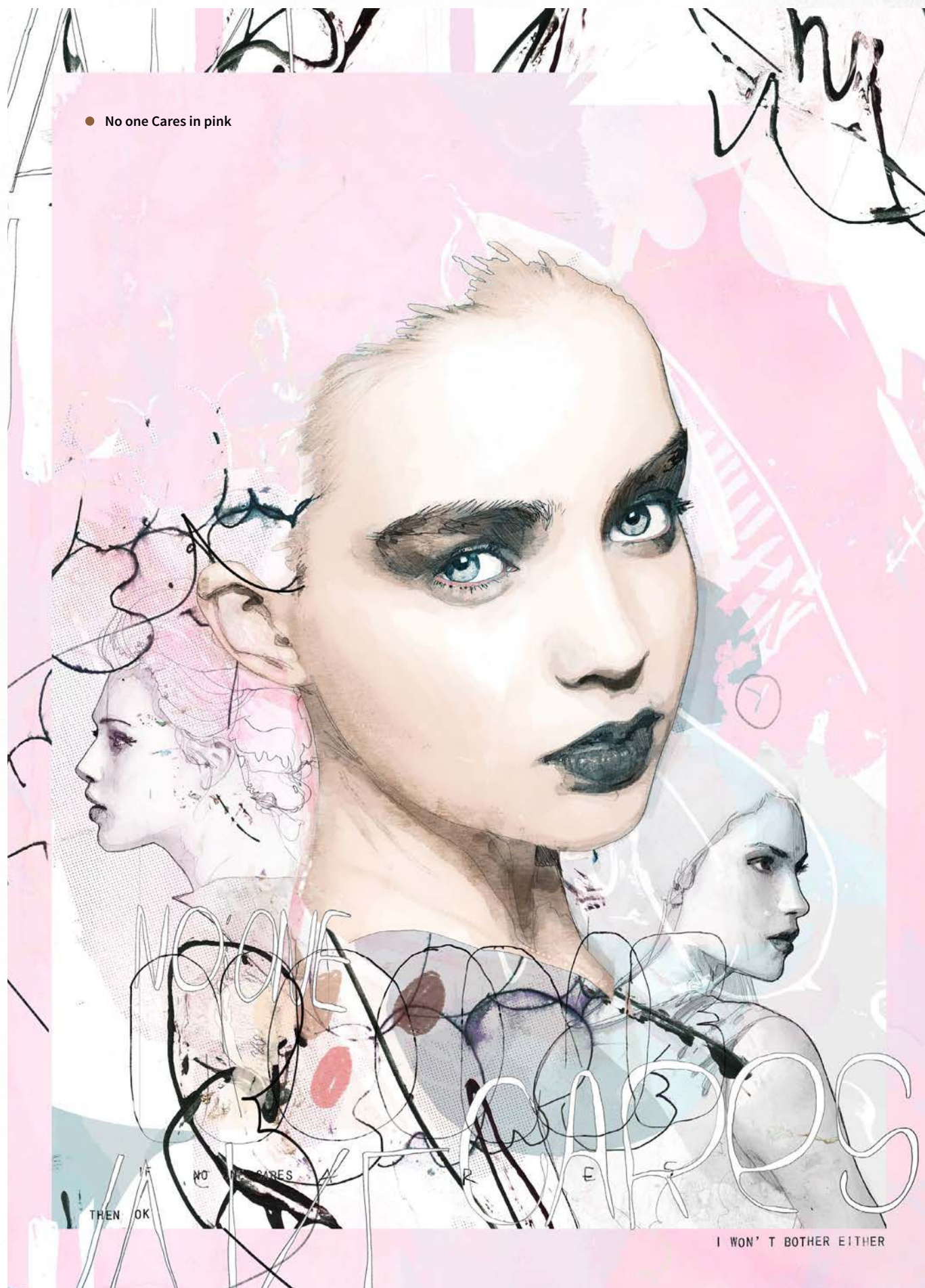
● Will all learn to fly with broken wings

● You are so gold

> **"For me, bringing hand-made textures into the digital realm, through Photoshop, is the best way to work and discover happy mistakes along the way"**

Reinterpreting all my influences with my own limited skills made it distinct and personal. I try to absorb a lot of different influences and really try to figure out how others are doing their works and find ways to incorporate it into my own style.

2da: Your work often contains text but is still distinctly recognizable as art, how do you strike a balance between text and image?

RV: I get my inspiration from graphic design posters and fashion magazine layouts usually. I try to play with the words as visual elements or shapes where they won't be necessarily easy to read or understand.

I know I'm not a well schooled graphic designer so I use this to my advantage and allow a certain form of chaos to direct my works. I usually let the image dictate where the text will be placed as another visual element. It's all instinctive.

2da: What are your favorite materials and tools to use?

RV: I often make my own textures with acrylic, markers, or watercolors. I like to get my hands dirty even if the final result isn't that artistic; I know that I might find some good use for it after I make it go through various process stages in Photoshop. For me, bringing hand-made textures into the digital realm, through Photoshop, is the best way to work and discover happy mistakes along the way.

2da: Color is used sparingly in your work but it has a strong impact; how do you select your color palette for a new image and what do you do if the colors just aren't working?

RV: I'd like to say that I really take care in planning how my colors will be used and that I pay attention to color theory, but that's not true. I am not over-thinking it and I try to make it fit with my current mood, for better or for worse.

I am not even sure I would be able to logically explain why the colors aren't working together for example, it's all very instinctual and I am okay if it's not supposed to be the correct way to do it.

I think there is more heart and soul when an image isn't 100-percent perfect. A bit of imperfection makes it more human.

2da: What materials, styles or techniques would you like to explore in the future?

RV: I would like to create analog works without the use of a computer. For once, really try to work with paper collages and painting abstract textures. I would really enjoy collaborating with a fashion designer to make some patterns for example. Perhaps I would also like to explore how to make interesting gifs with my own works. There are so many things I'd like to experiment with that it's hard to decide.

2da: And finally, what can we look forward to from you next?

RV: Despite having the necessity to find a part-time job on the side, I would like to be able to keep working as I am, and explore different ways to represent my emotions and thoughts. If anyone wants to hire me in the Brussels area, that'd be great! ●

Thank you Raphaël for speaking to 2dartist!

LEARN
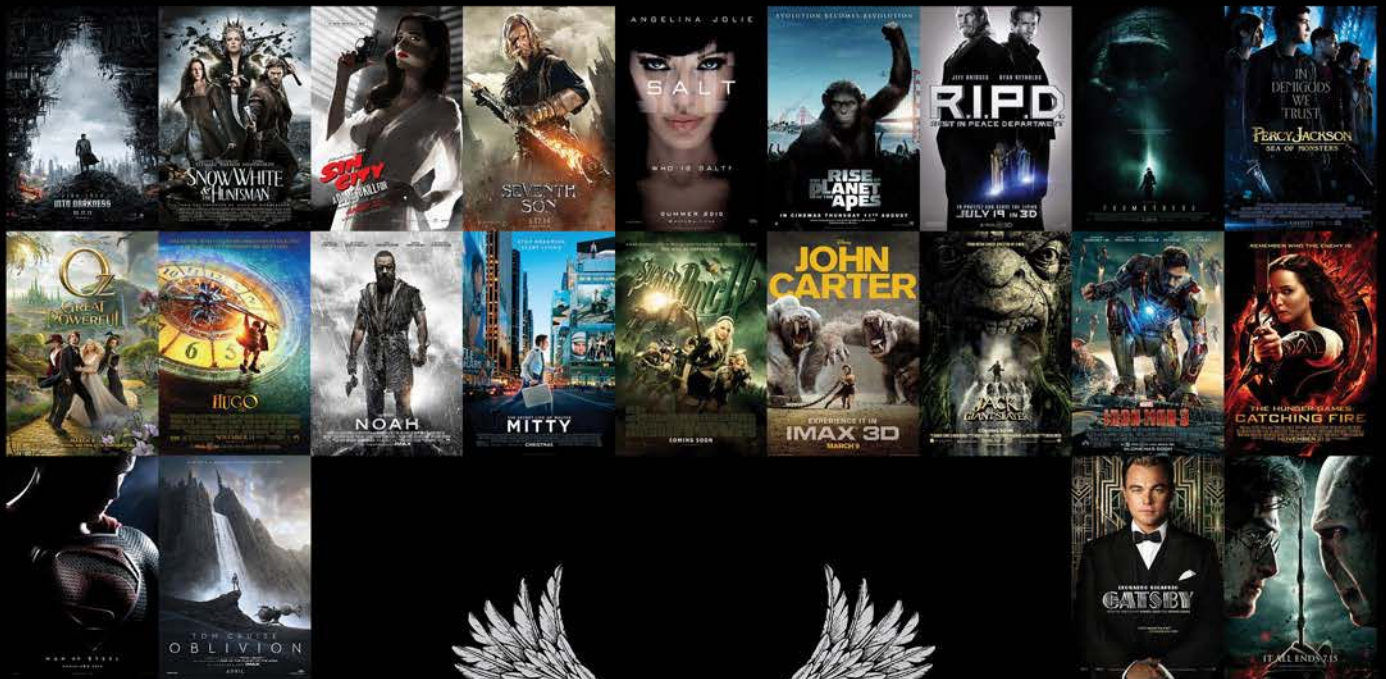
DREAM

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A selection of our Alumni's achievements, congratulations to them all.

MAT MILLER

Sketchbook

Look inside the sketchbook of illustrator Mat Miller as he talks to 2dartist about his inspiration, materials and techniques

The Artist

Mat Miller
matmillerillustration.com

Mat Miller is an illustrator creating work based on the natural world. He illustrates primarily for the action sports industry, but licenses his work for a variety of different products.

Be inspired by these stunning hand-drawn works...

Like all kids, I enjoyed drawing and making a mess with paints on a blank page. When I was around seven or eight years old I would copy characters from my favorite Disney films and computer games. *Yoshi* proved very popular with my classmates and I ended up doing quite a few for them. So those were my first commissions right there! I think I charged around 20p for them!

There wasn't a particular stand out moment that I realized I wanted to be an artist; but when you're repeatedly told that you are quite good at something, in your head, pursuing it becomes more viable and appealing as a career. My older brother was always very talented at art and looking up to him as a younger brother does, I tried to emulate him. He encouraged me in an indirect sort of way.

My motivation is mostly things like paying rent, buying new art materials, being able to see my friends and family more regularly. Seeing all the wonderful things that other artists are doing also makes me want to draw and improve my skill set. Receiving feedback from different social media platforms and design communities is also a good excuse to draw and put new ideas out there too.

Sketching is useful because it helps me to explore new ideas. I can refine techniques that I include in my work regularly and learn new techniques that I want to introduce into my work. You don't even have to show anyone your sketches so it can be a completely personal thing. Nothing you sketch has to be perfect or even good for that matter.

Inspiration and ideas

I find inspiration from TV, film, nature, books, dreams and music and so on; all of these different things all of the time. Dreams are interesting because your brain processes all of the elements you've soaked up then spits back out a scenario and sequence personal to you. Quite often my

Barn Swallow

01

dreams don't feature animals and nature that much but when they do I try to write down what happened with a couple of rough sketches and use this as the basis for a new piece.

I don't spend as much time as I should in galleries. I recently went to Dismaland (a pop-up dystopian theme park exhibition created by a number of high profile artists), the main gallery had a really high standard of work in there. I left feeling as though the hour or so I spent viewing work in person was a lot more beneficial to me than flicking through hundreds of pieces online in quick succession for the same amount of time. It's given me more motivation to seek out some exhibitions that I think I'll enjoy and go to them.

I also have my studio buddies who work with different mediums to me, but it's great because I think we are able to take a lot away from each other. We often find ourselves talking in great detail about new ideas, techniques and certain aesthetic qualities that we are going for with a particular piece.

When I am working on commercial work I have a process where I experiment predominantly with words. I brainstorm and link words together to build a rough image in my head. Lightning bolts of crazy brilliant ideas rarely just hit me. Even if they do, I'll then go through this same process to refine them. I can tell when an idea just won't work as the number of words generated dries up pretty quickly with the bad ideas.

When I get a really good idea there's a feeling of excitement and anticipation mixed together with the feeling that you're in the moment and riding on a bit of a creative wave. Despite the fact that I'll have a lot of different possibilities for this idea rattling around in my head, my mind is very clear and there are no distractions. It's pretty zen man.

Materials
I like to experiment with my personal work when I get the time. I think it's important to try and evolve as an artist to keep things fresh and engaging for myself as well as the viewer.
I'd quite like to try working with clay at some stage. I think 3D elements always look brilliant in among a primarily 2D exhibition.

At the moment I use a mechanical pencil, fine liners and a brush pen. I also do a lot of separate watercolor washes and splatters to scan in for final pieces as textures and backgrounds. I work on Bristol board a lot but I'm moving towards heavier watercolor papers to make more originals for an upcoming solo show. I generally favor a Pentel brush pen and my fine liners are Uni Pins.

● *Black Magic*

02

● *Hummingbird*

03

Sketching techniques
The best technique for sketching is just to stay loose and be confident in your strokes. It's not the end of the world if what you put on the page doesn't look exactly like what you are sketching.

In terms of line quality, I've always been told to work through the line quickly and smoothly. Again this comes back to confidence and being loose with your hands.

I don't think that formal instruction is essential to becoming a successful artist. I think some talent and a lot of determination are actually the two main ingredients. I came out of university with a better understanding of what my strengths were and a good knowledge of Photoshop and illustrator. However, I still had to figure out what my next steps were going to be and actually apply myself. Everyone will have a different path that they follow. That was mine. ●

04

05

04 A close up of *Journeying Spirit*

05 An owl from *Journeying Spirit*

06 *Kingfisher*

07

⚡ PRO TIPS

Work space

I worked from home on a dining table for a long time and it didn't really feel like my own creative space. I also nearly went mad in the process. Cabin fever is real folks. I now have a studio space that I can go to that I enjoy spending time in. Get your surroundings right for you and it makes a big difference.

Practice!

If you want to develop a style that you can imagine, but can't quite execute, then practice how to achieve the desired look. I'm talking hundreds of times. Do quick studies if you like. Some will be better than others but the aim is to return to them afterwards and pick out the parts that work so you can bring them forward to the next stage.

08

● *Pika*

09

● *Stoat*

10

Unbound Autonomy

2dartist

Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

We're always on the lookout for talented artists and their artwork to adorn the pages of our magazine. If you think you have what it takes, get in touch!

To submit, simply email Annie at **annie@3dtotal.com** with a selection of your images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Art **Gallery**

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!

Bring it to its Knees
Miguel Bruecker, aka DICE
Year created: 2014
Web: diceartist.squarespace.com

Submit your images! Simply email **annie@3dtotal.com**
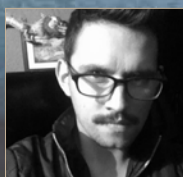
Monk
Michael Schneider
Year created: 2015
Web: artstation.com/artist/michaelschneider
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Belgian Shepherd
Juan Pablo Corredor Martínez
Year created: 2015
Web: juanpablocorredor.com

JUAN PABLO
CORREDOR
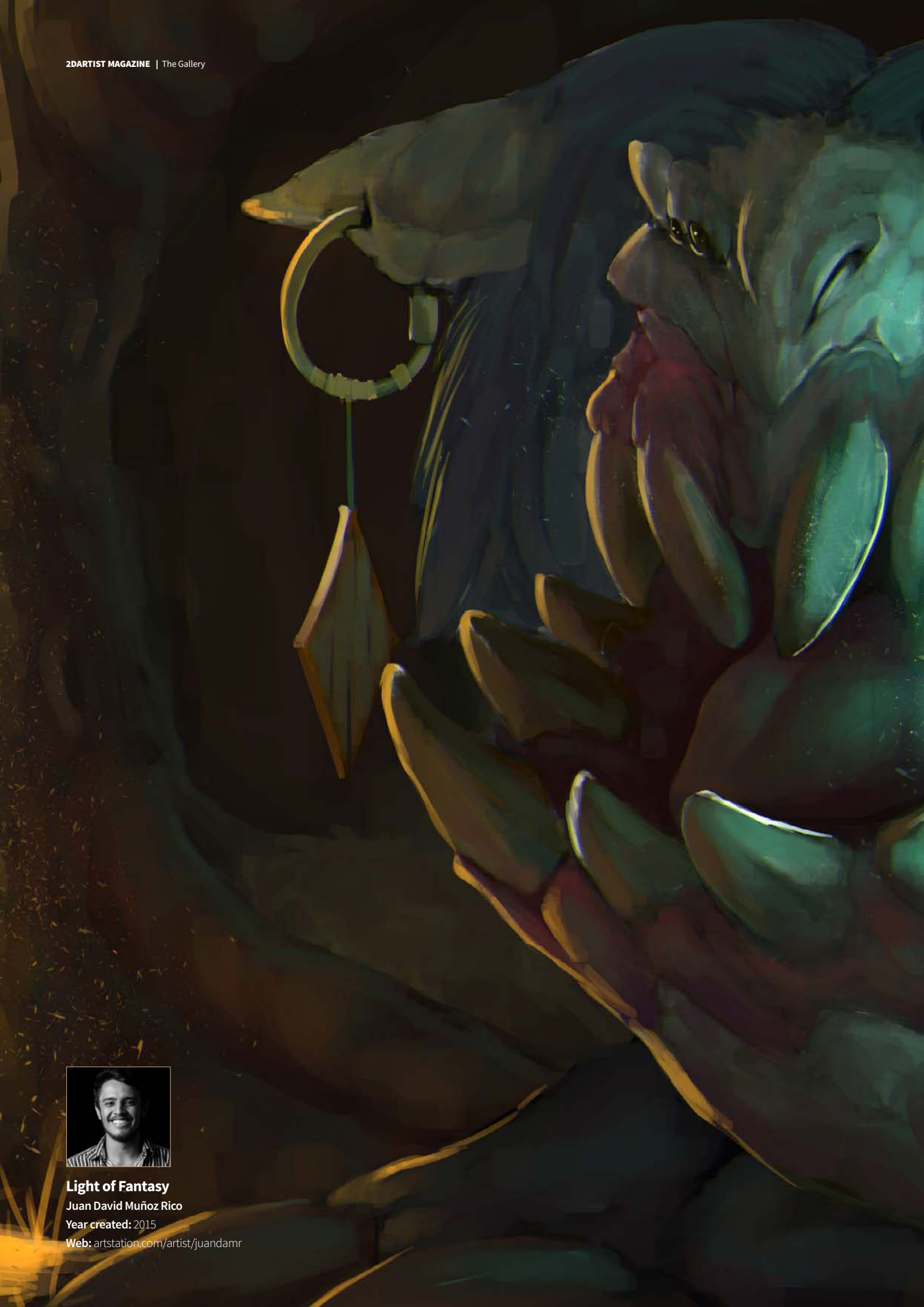
Light of Fantasy
Juan David Muñoz Rico
Year created: 2015
Web: artstation.com/artist/juandamr
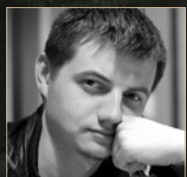
Weapons for Peace - Invasion
Valeriy Orlov
Year created: 2015
Web: valeronart.com

The lake
Patricia Casarrubios (Patcas Illustration)
Year created: 2015
Web: patcas.carbonmade.com
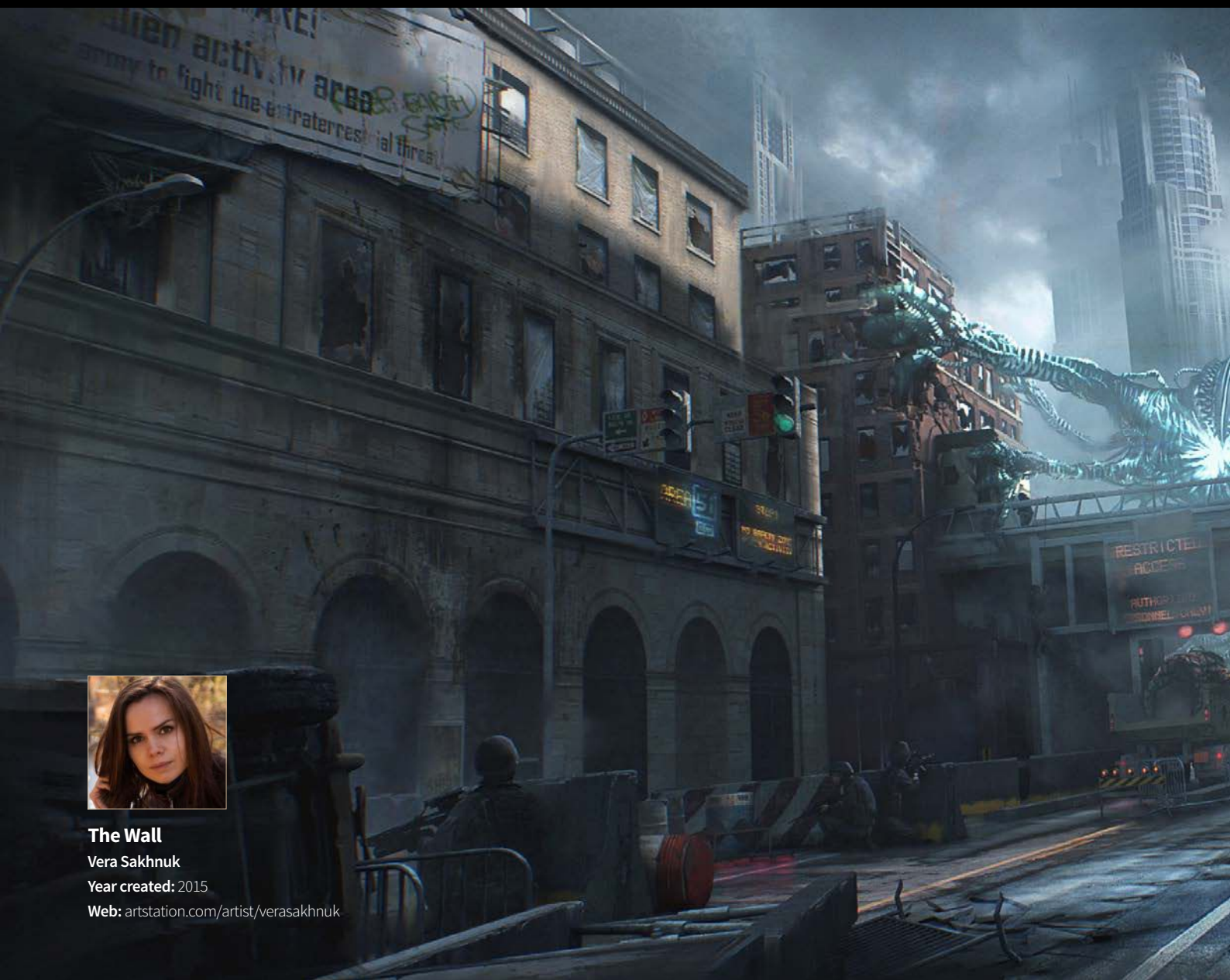
The Wall
Vera Sakhnuk
Year created: 2015
Web: artstation.com/artist/verasakhnuk

Waste eater
Hiroki Matsushita
Year created: 2015
Web: matsuba-illustration.tumblr.com

Speed paint
a serene scene

Ioan Dumitrescu shows how you can transform a basic railway image into a historic snow-covered environment with this speed paint tutorial ▶

The Artist

Ioan Dumitrescu
ioandumitrescu.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Ioan Dumitrescu is a freelance concept artist from Romania. He has recently worked on projects for Sony and Blur, and his work has featured in many games, commercials and on book covers.
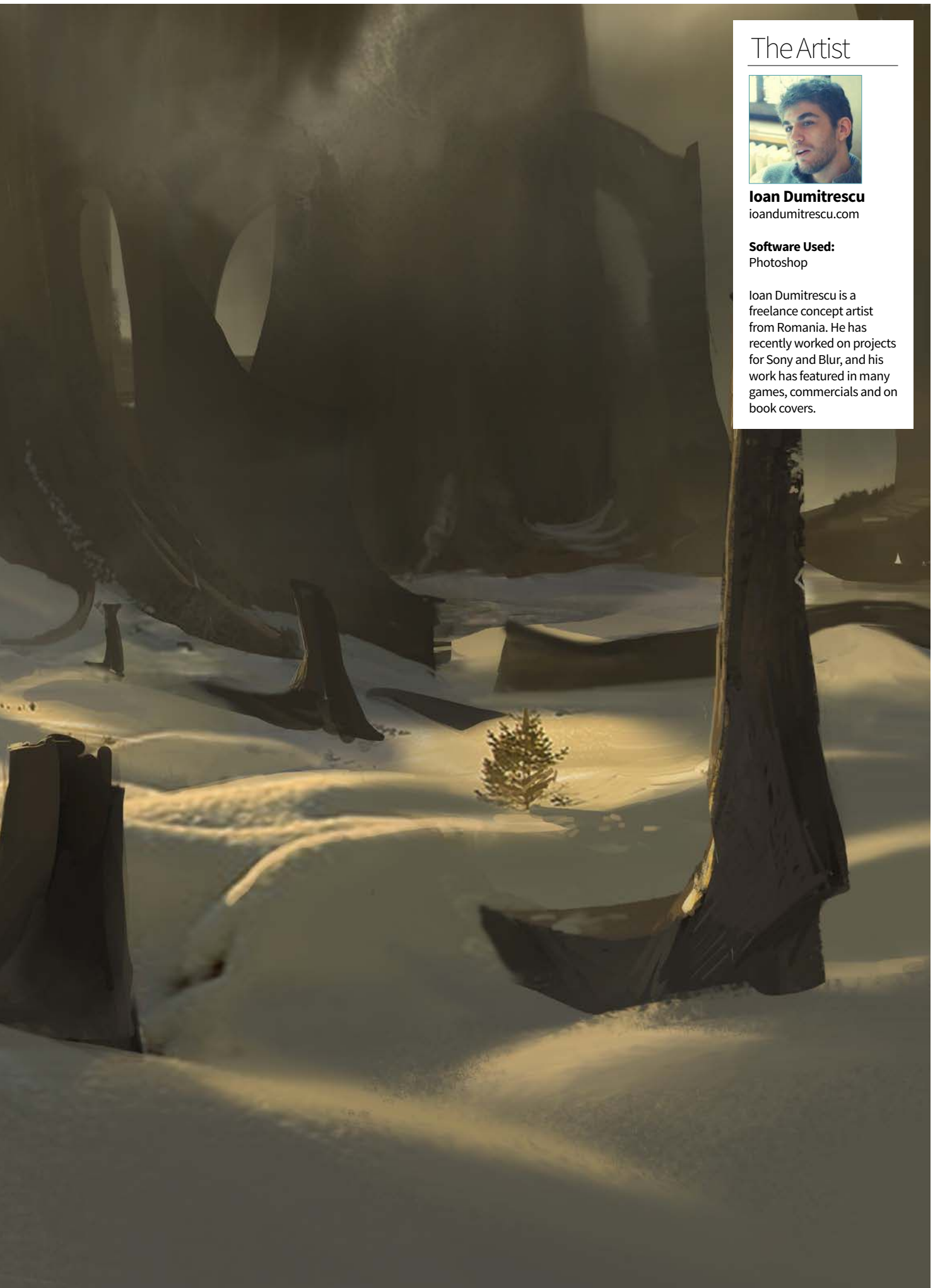
Hone your environment speed painting skills...

Hi guys, this is my second tutorial for painting a historic fantasy landscape (you can find the first tutorial in issue 117 of 2dartist). This time the painting is set in a universe with little correlation to our human history. I create for myself a tale of magical lands, with materials bent to the will of man in ways that are only possible in the imagination.

I also want to show, that you don't need to use subject related photo references for your ideas. What you need is just to let yourself see things, allow your imagination to dictate the terms and follow your instincts and you will bring out things you did not think of at first.

For all of these things, patience is essential. Do not be overwhelmed by a blank canvas or a lack of ideas but try to see them as an advantage, or as an opportunity for the unexpected! Taking chances and accepting failure is the only way to learn. Taking two hours to try and explore the many potential ways to express a mood, or a feeling through your image is definitely worth it!

01 Find a reference: For this tutorial I don't just start with looking at a specific reference, I simply scroll through my own images to see if I can find anything to inspire myself. I quickly see a cool photo of a railway, with all the tracks laid aside after being changed. What I like is the feeling it gives me; a scarce, serene environment, and the rusted tracks make up a cool pattern. The picture was taken with a tiny GoPro camera, ideal for keeping in your pocket for the time when something comes up in your daily walks.

02 **Start painting!** I start painting immediately, sampling in the colors and keeping to its current perspective for now. I start imagining a huge citadel of steel. The lines towards the camera and on the sides I interpret as the structural foundation for the citadel, 'feeding' off the ground and into the skies! To appropriate this deserted land I also think I should make it menacing and abandoned, but still able to show a past shadow of its former self.

03 **Enlarge the canvas:** I notice that I have crowded a few too many elements into the scene so I enlarge the canvas to the right to make way for further development. Nothing can restrict me here. I could consider the sketch at this stage done as far as the idea goes. But we have two hours to make it more interesting, so we shall see what can be found.

04 **Alter the atmosphere:** I feel that the image at this point is a bit too muddy for my intent. In the end I want an epic, yet serene and peaceful look. So I keep the structure as the main element of contrast and work around it.

First I change the sky to more of a sunset look, full of clouds and mist. Now I take the intention of the first photo, the snow to be more precise, and which I think would make a great choice to fill the field with.
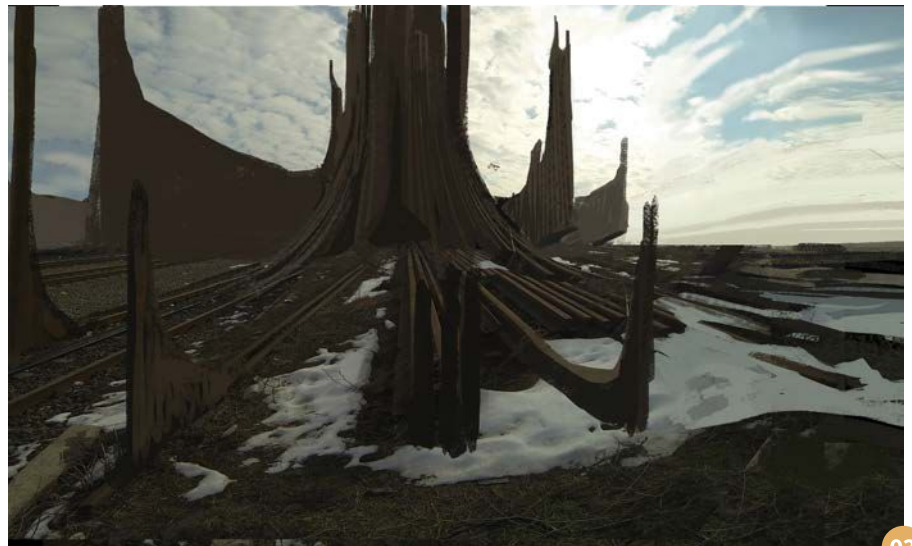
The scale has to be huge, but we will sort the scale at the end. The photo I have chosen is of an old mobile shot of some snow in the winter. I bring it across and cover the structure and the fields. What I like about the photo are the shapes of the piled snow, so I change the tones and colors to fit the environment. I think of an environment that sort of meshed with the sky, unifying the sereneness of it all.

05 **Refine the shapes:** Now it's time to make ready the shapes. The scene needs to represent something a bit less abstract, which ▶

01 The original photograph that inspired *Serenity*

02 Once an idea has been settled on and a reference has been chosen, it's time to start painting!

03 Enlarge the canvas to the right to stop the scene becoming overcrowded

04 To give a sense of serenity the sky is changed and snow added to the ground

05

06

will be a challenge, so I don't want to pressure myself. What I manage to solve is enough.

If I hit a creative wall, I move on to something else and see if I can solve something there instead. When I feel more confident, I will go back to the

first problem I had to begin with. For now these pillar like things around a central core do not do it for me. Maybe in another situation it would have worked. I also still try to connect it better to the ground and snow, further the refining shapes here and there.

06 **Adjust the structure:** I begin arranging the main structure, suggesting an immense citadel of metal. Once I get a good silhouette going I puncture it to give it more depth and scale. I go ahead and put in atmosphere to further separate the structures from one another.

Things definitely need a bit more atmosphere so I play with the sun and the mist to give a richer feeling to the piece. Adding small highlights, ridges, pieces of metal that catch the light would give more volume. Laying snow on top of the extrusions helps with perspective and further polishes the volume.

07 **Direct the viewer's eye:** Further polishing of the snow on the ground and the protruding metal pillars help the eye to hone in on the main central structure of the scene. Now the composition is in place and I've marked the main lines, the viewer's eye will follow the curves around the image. They block the borders and focus on the center of the image. The fragments coming out of the snow recede into the distance and help the huge scale of things. The atmosphere helps here as well, so I put in clouds of mist towards the top to engulf the citadel.

08 **Imply scale and finish!** Now it is time for the final details. The best way to show the relative scale of things is to place a human being. I place several wandering warriors, heading towards the citadel. They help to tell a story, they engage the audience into believing what's happening and are something the viewer can associate themselves with.

Another thing I watch for is the hard edges and soft edges of things. The flow of composition is helped by this, letting the eye rest and move

along. You can notice this clearly on the left side of the citadel, around the sharp sun, the soft forms of the clouds and the main structure. Below it there are sharp edges. Soft marks in the snow also indicate wind gusts taking snow with them.

A thing that is bothering me is the symmetry of the foreground pillars, left and right, so I enlarge the right one. Balance doesn't always come from equality. It's all about balancing big to small, left to right all around the image. It's about keeping a rhythm and a flow to things.

Now the image is complete. I hope that you have enjoyed the process and that this tutorial will help you with your own work! ●

05 Refine the shapes to improve the connection between the structures and the ground

06 Arrange the structure and add to the atmosphere by playing with the sunlight and mist

07a The shapes in the foreground help to direct the viewer's eye

07b Polishing the snow and pillars further helps direct attention to the center of the image
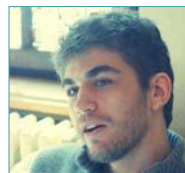
The Artist

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The Artist
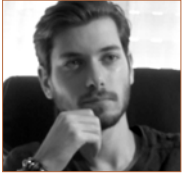
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Software Used:
ZBrush, CINEMA 4D,
Photoshop, KeyShot

Maxime Delcambre is a
freelance environment
concept artist based in
Paris, working for film and
game companies. He mixes
software and techniques
to quickly achieve the best
result possible.

Add motion blur to flying vehicles

Environment artist Maxime Delcambre shows how you can create the
impression of high-speed motion in both 2D and 3D software ▶

Diversify your work with these methods for showing motion...

This tutorial will explain to you how to create a hard surface air vehicle, add it to a scene, and finalize it with effects like motion blur.

I will first take care of the spaceship with the first step consisting of simply drawing some sketches. Once I have a strong idea for the base of my future spaceship, I will use ZBrush to try to sculpt the shape before moving on to create the details.

Once the speed sculpt is finished, I won't try to move on to the high resolution because I would lose too much time, and the speed sculpt step is enough for me to produce a picture. However, I do use KeyShot as a rendering engine, but I will then come back to it later.

In the second phase, I will take care of the environment and will suggest to you two different ways to create it, depending on your working method. The first one will be from a 3D base thanks to CINEMA 4D, and the other will be created with photographs and Photoshop alone.

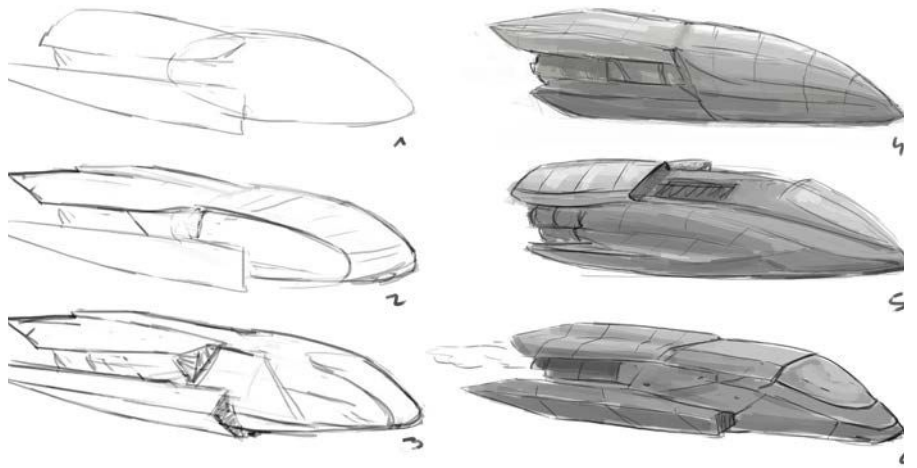For the 3D base, I use CINEMA 4D because it is simple to use. I will add some texture to the modeling and some lights into the scene, which will generate shadows (which are not

always easy to create without a 3D base). It is for me one of the faster and most intuitive 3D software which can create this kind of result. Then the final step will consist of adding motion and light effects like the motion blur and the color dodge.

01 Sketches of the spaceship: First I draw quick sketches to put down the idea which is in my head as fast as possible. I already know very well what I want to start with: a kind of little ship or 'flying car' for some people, very fast and easy to handle for a race downtown, near homes. I also want the design of this ship to have 'wings' on the back. I was inspired by the Lamborghini design and modern fighter aircrafts. It is indeed important to be inspired by something

which already exists but in my opinion, it is not inevitable at all. I suggest you work using gray tones in order to give volumes and shades instead of a sketch, in the case where you don't really know what you want to do. I try to be correct with the proportions and the perspective, but that is not the purpose of this stage so just do whatever you want to!

02 Composition sketch: To be honest, I don't usually draw composition sketches. When I don't have the time, I directly use the 3D. This step can be optional, but in a lot of situations my employers like to quickly see the sketches to have an idea of what I am doing and evaluate them. It is then in my opinion really useful to know how to do it.
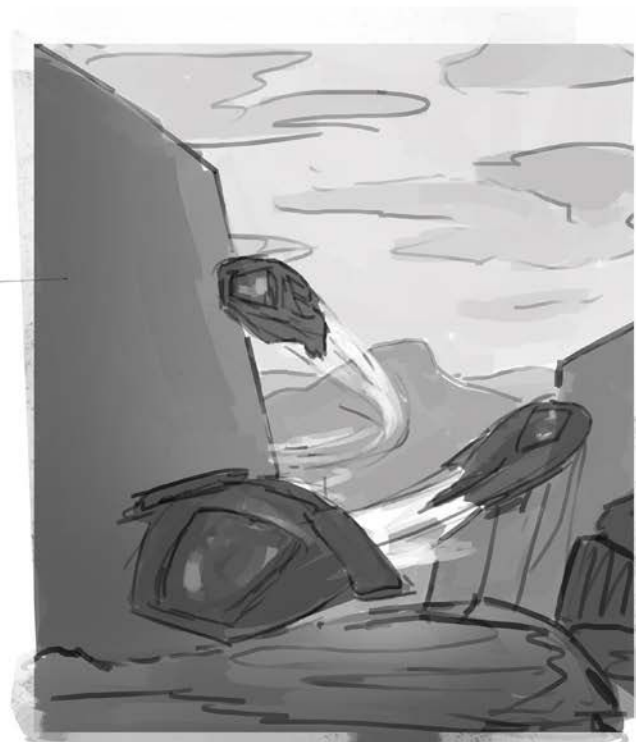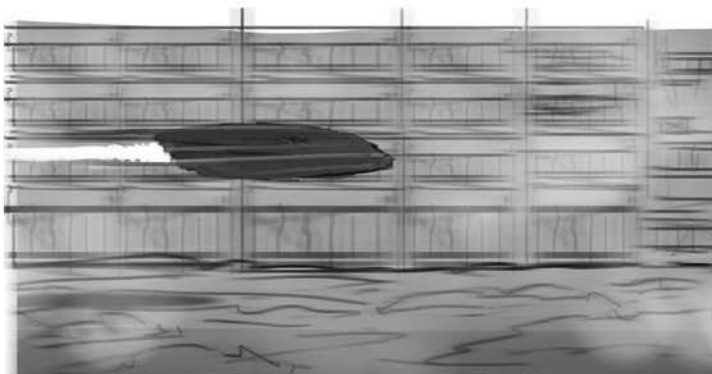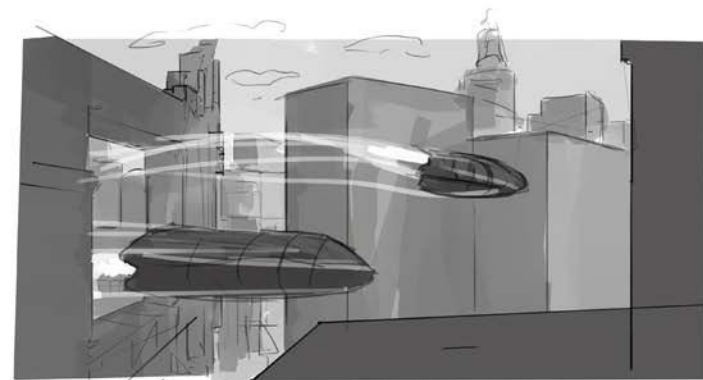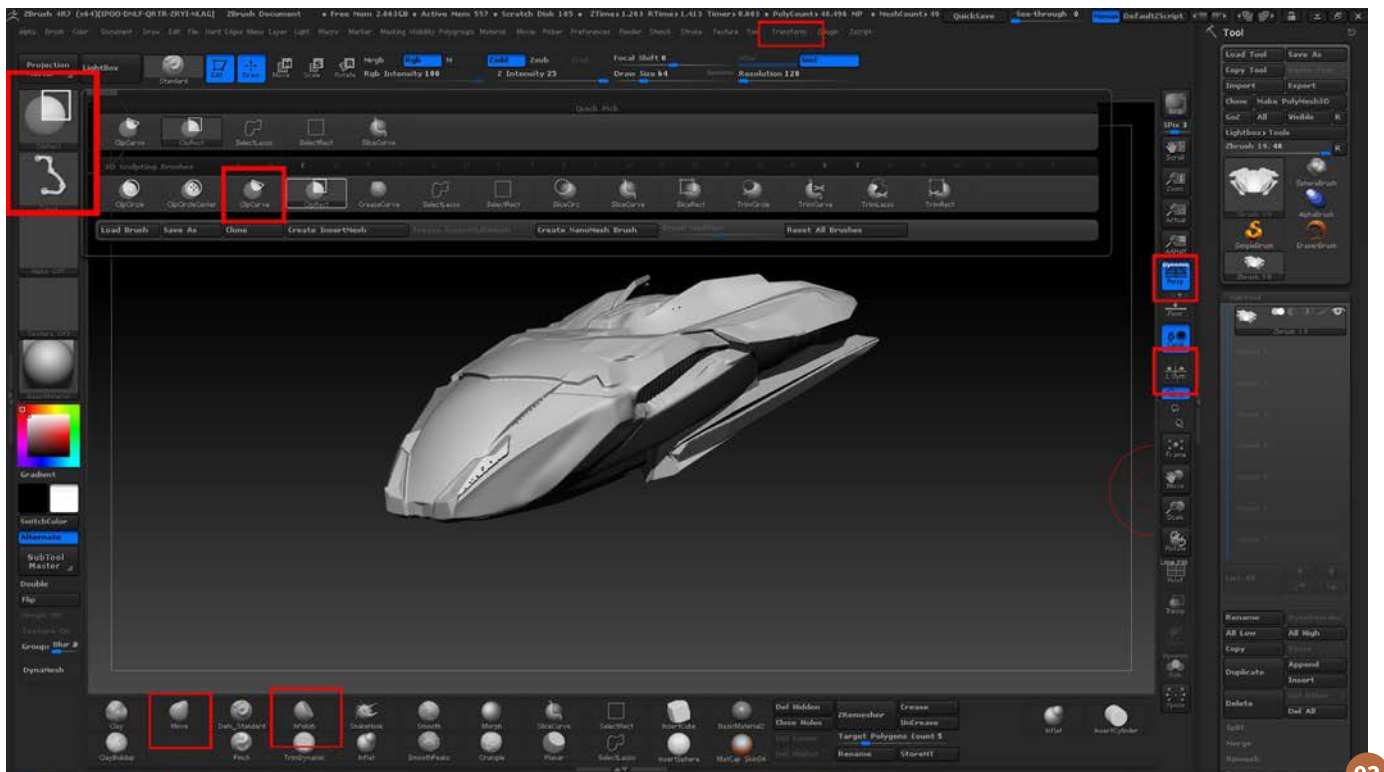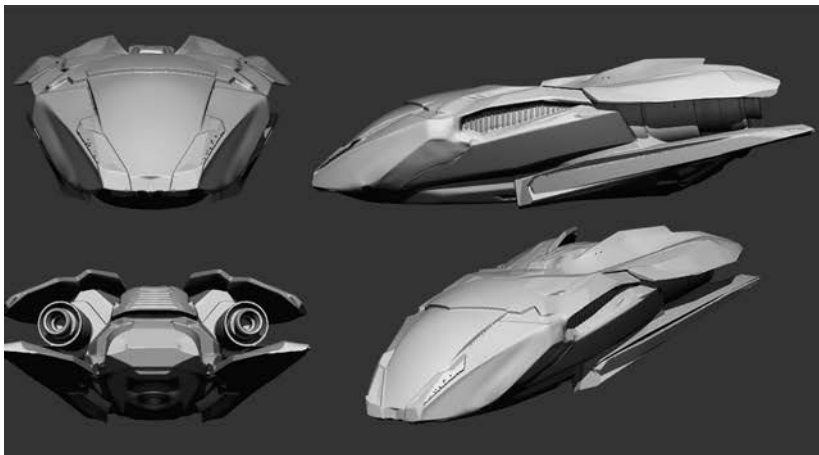
Totally forget the aesthetic part of the image. It only has to tell a story. For example, in my first picture, I have the idea of a futuristic race taking place downtown. For the second one, in a portrait format, I was thinking about a more immersive composition, with a very close camera and the vehicles rushing toward us. The third one is a bit more ordinary, but for me it is the most efficient way to demonstrate the speed of a vehicle. It would take place in a really poor desert (like a slum for instance).

03 Go to ZBrush! I begin to sculpt using subdivisions, with the same purpose of creating a base shape without getting into the details first. Before doing anything, activate the symmetry by pressing X and check the Local symmetry button (L.Sym). Thanks to this, I stay in symmetry on the object whatever happens. I then use Move and Scale to have a global

proportion of the cube, and I also use Clipcurve (Ctrl+Shift). Once mastered, this is the most important tool for hard surfaces. My two favorite brushes are the Move and hPolish. You can also use the TrimDynamic brush. Always remember to keep the perspective view activated (notably for the renders), but if it becomes necessary don't hesitate to turn it to have an orthographic view.

04 Renders of KeyShot: Once my speed sculpt is finished, I merge all of my SubTools and I export it as OBJ at the end of the import in KeyShot, which will be useful for the final render. KeyShot is a photo-realist 3D render software. It is very simple to use and allows for real-time visualization of the modifications you will have to bring to your 3D model.

I can for example change the material, the color, and the environment (HDRI) at any time and

have a visual in just one second. The use of the HDRI in KeyShot is for sure the reason why I use it because it creates subtle color variations on my model depending on the environment, and that makes a difference. I would have never have such a beautiful result on my spaceship without this 'lightening' that I will add again with Photoshop. ▶

01 The difference between a line sketch and the others in mass

02 The race in a futuristic city, with an immersive view and a poor desert

03 Personal interface of ZBrush and the main modeling tools of the hard surface

04 On the left, you have the final renders of the speed sculpt and ZBrush. On the right, the renders of KeyShot

05 **3D base in CINEMA 4D:** Here is my final base in CINEMA 4D. When I open the software, I automatically do some little things before starting anything, which are essential to get the same render as mine. These little things are adding 'global lighting' and 'ambient occlusion' to the render parameters, adding an environment and a sky, then checking the option Fog in the environment parameters (and why not add a color too?) From there, I create a few cubes to get closer to the composition that I have chosen. I can subdivide them and extrude the faces by unchecking the option 'preserve the groups'. It gives a really great effect.

Then add textures with Cubic application, and finally a light by activating the 'strong shadow' or 'diffused shadow'. I don't need an external render motor, the one from CINEMA 4D suits me.
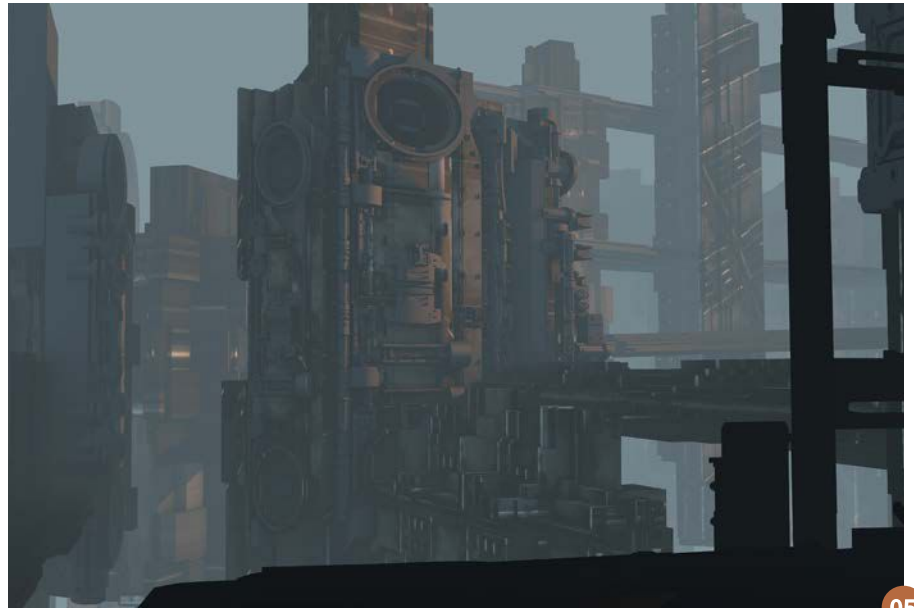
06 **Photoshop harmonization:** In this step, my principal purpose when I open Photoshop is to kill the 3D effect by adding smoke to separate the plans and harmonize the picture. I quickly integrate a photograph of a sky, and some building pictures into the night with the Lighten mode to cover the scene. The render in CINEMA 4D is from the basis very faded and unsaturated.

I leave it this way until I am finished with my paintover, and then I change the light, saturation and contrast parameters. I darken the foreground, unsaturating and lightening the second plan and background. Once the regulation of the exposure level is done, I merge the visible tracings (Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E), duplicate the tracing (Ctrl+J) and turn it into black-and-white with Inlay (20/25%). The paintover can last hours but avoid spending too much time on the invisible parts. I always look at the navigator to have an idea of what is useful and what isn't.

07 **Photoshop intensity:** I create a render of the ships only in the scene from CINEMA 4D and add a bluish texture, then I add the spaceships to my picture. The KeyShot render will perfectly mix itself with the one from CINEMA 4D. It is used now with the Lighten mode to recuperate the light information and with the Product mode for the shadows. I add intensity to the picture with a big color dodge (saturated orange). The light coming from the right literally hits the spaceship. The smoke coming out of the jet engine is painted with a Cloud brush.

Here, the motion blur has an important role on the spaceships because it is as if we are seeing the action happening in front of a fixed camera, and that the spaceships are flying right in front of us with a maximum speed. I also add motion blur on the left side of the buildings to intensify the speed effect, but it is also a question of taste.

08 **The photo-montage:** For the second illustration with the matte painting method, I start with a quick photo-montage (I find the photographs on www.textures.com). There is approximately ten building pictures or so, and four or five deserts for the ground. I put all of these together like a puzzle and I try to finish. I use the fusion mask and the Round Blur brush to erase or add parts until it looks good. This method has big advantages, as it is fast! But I feel that it is way more limited than using a 3D base. That is why I learned how to master both of them. I then try to find again the faded and unsaturated aspect of the CINEMA 4D render for all the pictures to be harmonized together. I use Picture > Settings > Level > Output level. ▶


08

⚡ PRO TIP
Use of the Clipcurve

After having selected the tool and the Stroke, Curve (similar to the Feather tool of Photoshop), there are two or three things you need to know to correctly use the Clipcurve:

1. Click on Ctrl+Shift, pull a straight line, then let go of Ctrl+Shift.
2. Press Alt once for a smooth angle (as in the lower-red line on the picture).
3. Press Alt twice for a tough angle (the sharper line on the picture).
4. The shaded external part by the dotted line shows where the Clipcurve will impact (see the arrows on the picture), press and maintain Alt to change the sense.

At the beginning it was quite hard for me to understand how this tool worked, but it is often the case in ZBrush that there many little hidden shortcuts which change your life.
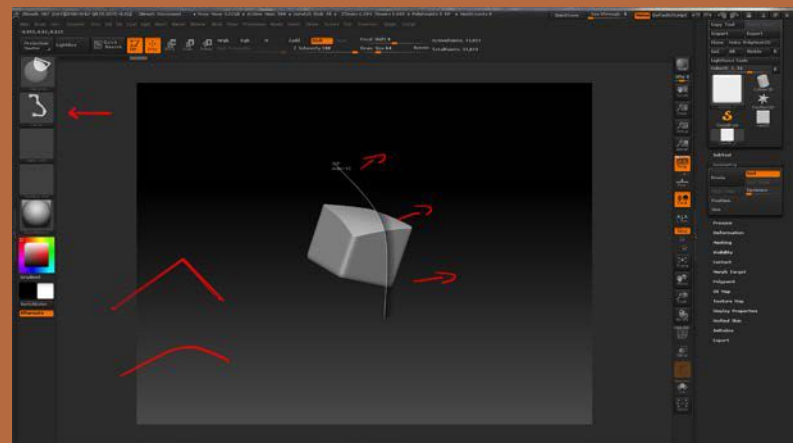
▲ Examples of the use of the Clipcurve with a smooth angle

05 Here is the final version of the 3D base rendered in CINEMA 4D with some essential adjustments

06 The first plans are more contrasted and dark, with a background that is more unsaturated and less contrasted

07 The light and the shadow have a fundamental role in an illustration

08 About ten building pictures and five desert pictures for the ground

09 **Speed in one click:** I start by taking out the saturation and the contrast of the pictures, adding a Sepia filter and painting the clouds with the main color of the picture. I add white tracks behind the spaceships like a dust cloud that it would create as it flies over. Between the buildings, I paint a shadow with the Product mode to separate the elements, and I repeat this step in several places which wouldn't be in the light. It is time to add the motion blur which will completely change this flat picture into a dynamic one (Filter > Blur > Directional blur > 0° and between 100 and 150 intensity). But this time, the blur will be focused on the environment and not on the spaceships, as if we were inside a camera following the spaceships at the same speed.
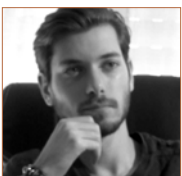
10 **Final dynamic details:** To finish and add dynamism, I crop the image by lightly inclining to the left. I also intensify the contrast, the saturation and the gamma to find power in the colors. At that stage, I notice that my spaceship is too much to the right. I decide to apply the Rule of Thirds. It consists of placing the important elements, which have to be the most visible, on the vertical and horizontal thirds of the picture. I use the 'density +' and the 'density -' tool to bring light to the spaceship. You can also use the 'finger' tool by selecting a brush like the Splash brush. It can be really useful to create motion effects.

There! This second illustration is finished! I hope you learned some tricks and that this tutorial will be able to serve a lot of people, depending on their working methods. ●

The Artist

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The directional blur can really give a dynamic speed effect in a picture

09

3DTOTAL'S ANATOMICAL COLLECTION: NEW FIGURES AVAILABLE NOW

Affordable anatomical reference figures for traditional and digital artists, including male and female planar models and the impressive biosuit figure designed by Alessandro Baldasseroni!

Photo manipulate special effects

Mark Kolobaev demonstrates how to create a detailed war scene featuring realistic fire by combining 2D and 3D techniques ▶

The Artist

Mark Kolobaev
mous.squarespace.com

Software Used:
ZBrush, KeyShot, DAZ 3D, Photoshop

Mark Kolobaev is a freelance concept artist from Belgorod, Russia. He works with both 2D and 3D software and regularly creates online CG courses and tutorials.

## Create a dramatic scene with photo manipulation…

I love cinematic frames, with properly placed accents and a focal point, when the composition is concise and not overwrought. Before I begin a new drawing, I try to get as much inspiration as possible by viewing my favorite movies and my library references. I am confident that the most interesting work happens only when you get a charge of motivation from somewhere!

At first, I browse through hundreds of different frames from different movies, choosing the ones that I like and I start to analyze them. I watch how the director has put together the composition, the light, and the impression I get from the frame as a viewer. Then I start to sketch. Of course, before I even sit down at the computer, I come up with a plot, decide what the parts are and sketch some ideas in my sketchbooks. I believe that the traditional and digital art forms are one and cannot be divided, so for the best results I use both of the forms.

I also really like to use the program Alchemy. In it you can have fun playing with the composition, and silhouettes. If you have not tried this program it is a must have!

With the comfortable and simple tools of this program, you cannot only draw interesting compositions, but also generate a thousand new ideas for your work with the creative brushes available.

01 **Design a composition:** I choose the best sketch and start to think of a little story to go with it. I consider where these characters are, how they should look and what is going on in the frame. I ask myself these questions as much as possible until the work looks interesting for the viewer.
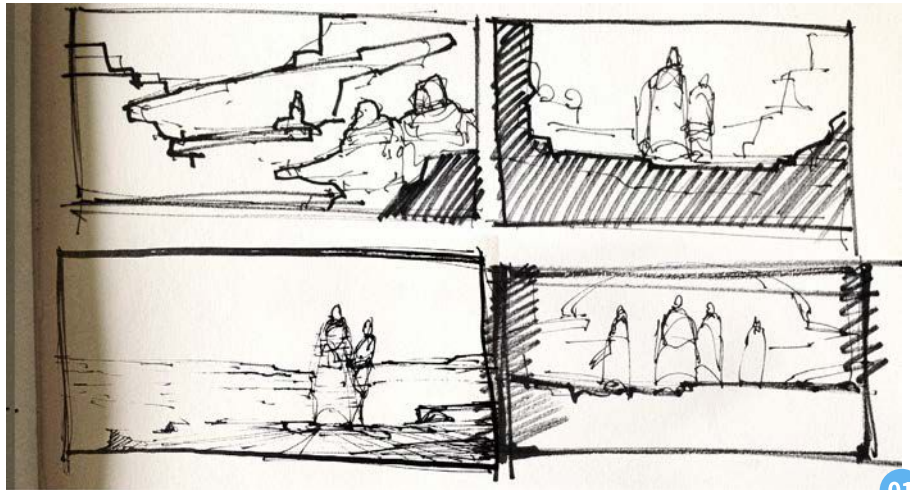
I want to also say that I do not always do sketches. Sometimes I have an interesting composition in mind, and I can begin to draw them without spending time on the sketches.

02 **Create a base:** Now I have the sketches and an idea I am ready to continue. At this point I decide whether I will make 3D blocks or if I will begin immediately to collect references, and therefore not work in 3D. For this picture, I choose the first way.

There are so many programs available to help you create 3D bases. I usually work in ZBrush, but if I

need people, using DAZ 3D helps me. There are so many methods and techniques to combine these two programs but I will limit myself to only one.

In DAZ 3D I create a standard Genesis 2 base male and move it into ZBrush. Then I begin the process of 'bashing' the 3D parts. I have a lot of Multi Mesh brushes that I have bought on Gumroad.com or on different sites. I create little details myself, but with the help of these brushes I can quickly do some 3D bashing.

**03** **Generate a scene:** When I have finished creating a model for the character, I
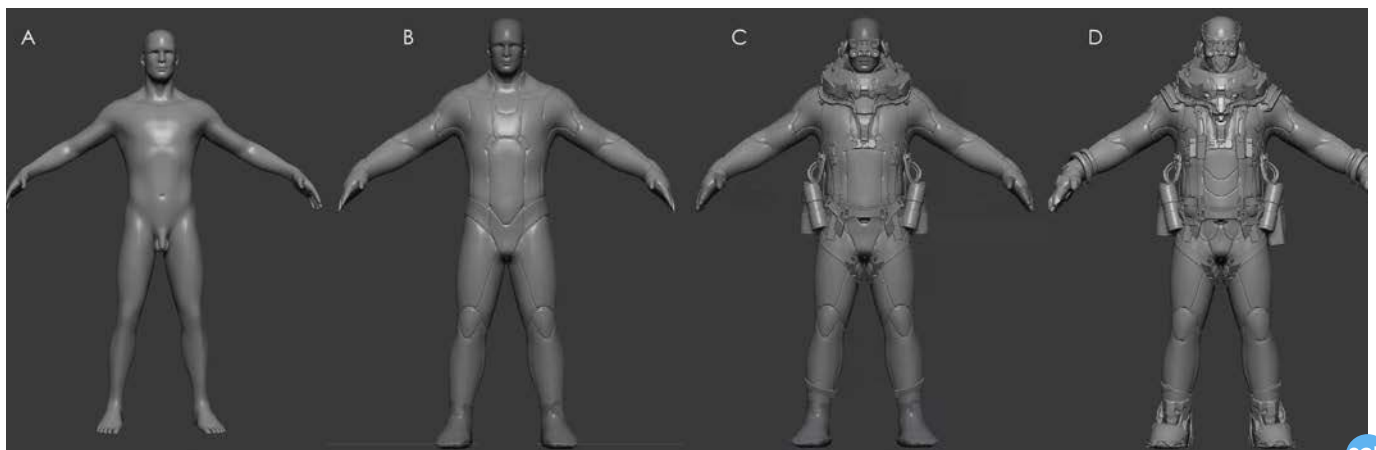
make a simple scene in the program ZBrush and place in the objects I think I need, to see them together in the final frame. This is important, as I now almost have the final frame composed. In Photoshop I shall correct the composition, but the basic composition is created at this point, and I carefully place each object in the frame.

04 **Insert a ship:** I put each model in position using the Masking mode and normal Rotation in ZBrush. It's an interesting process; I will always get up from the computer and imagine where my soldiers are. I think about what their position is and where they are now watching from.

I want to make a ship in the background, so with the same bashing I make a quick 3D model of the ▶

___
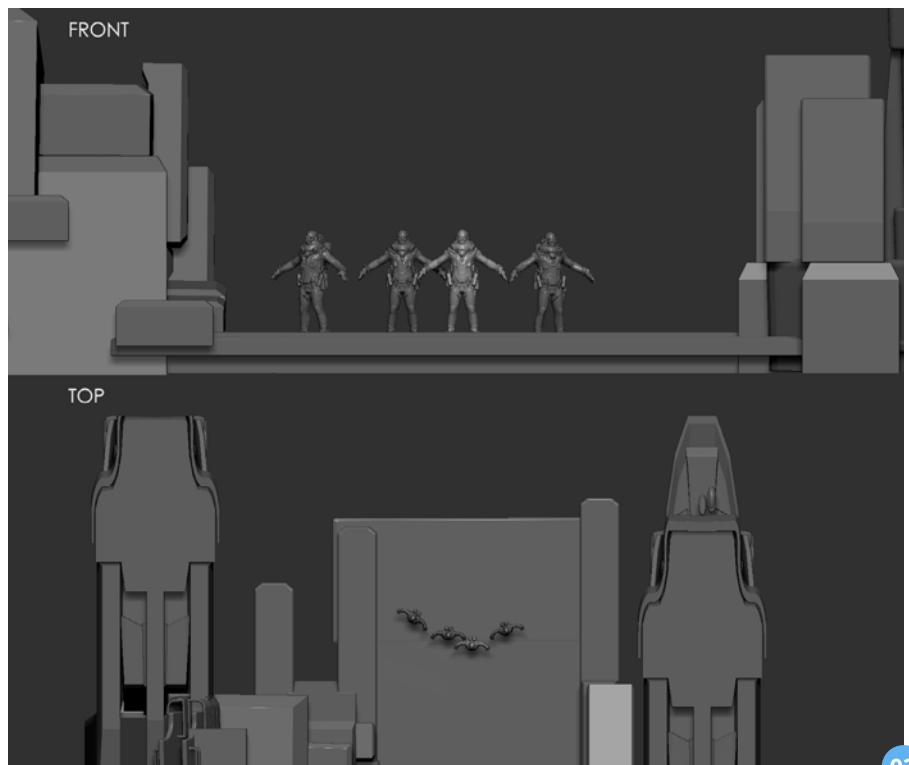
01 **Pick the strongest of your Initial sketches**

02a **A Genesis 2 base male in DAZ 3D**

02b **The base is then added to using Multi Mesh brushes**

03 **Create a simple scene in ZBrush featuring your models**

04 **Adjust the position of the models and add a ship to give context**

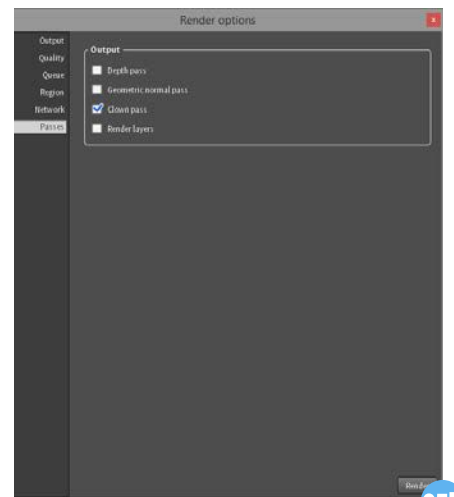
⚡ **PRO TIP**
Maintain motivation
I want to say that it is really important to keep imagining how the final result of an artwork will look, right from the very start. Constantly raise your energy and motivation for the piece by watching your favorite movies, or perhaps looking at your favorite references during the making process.
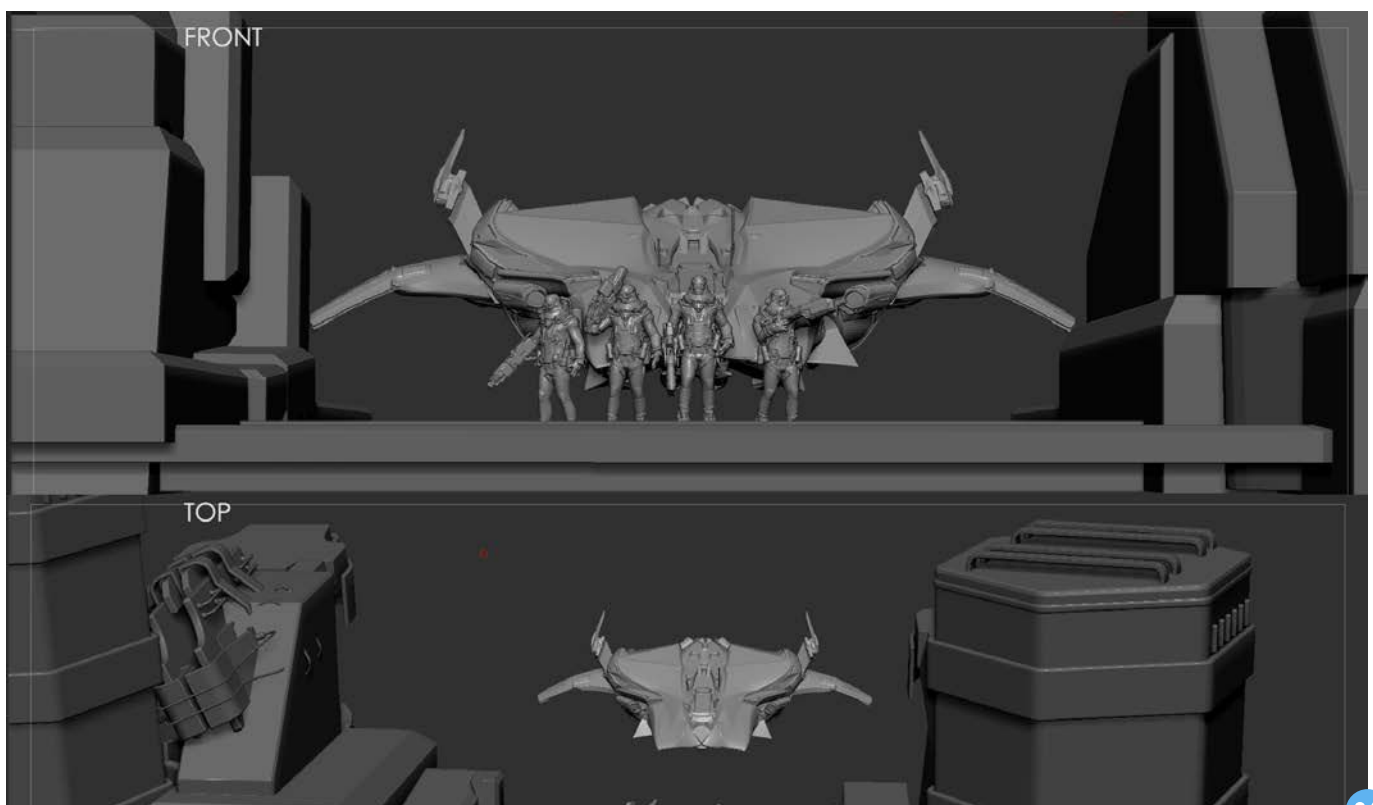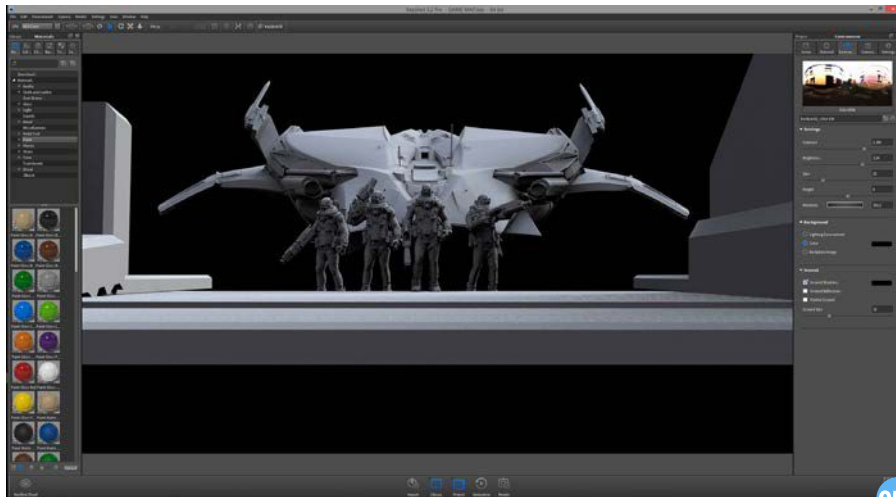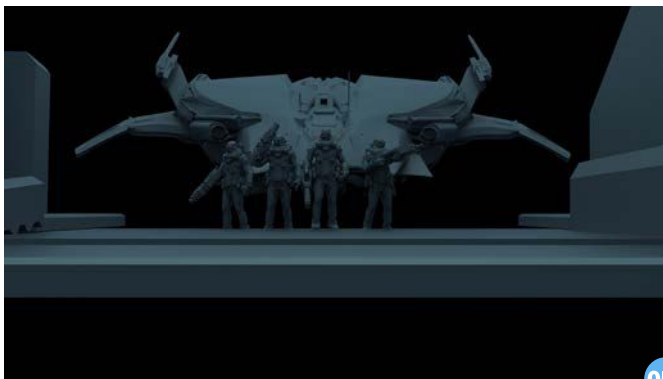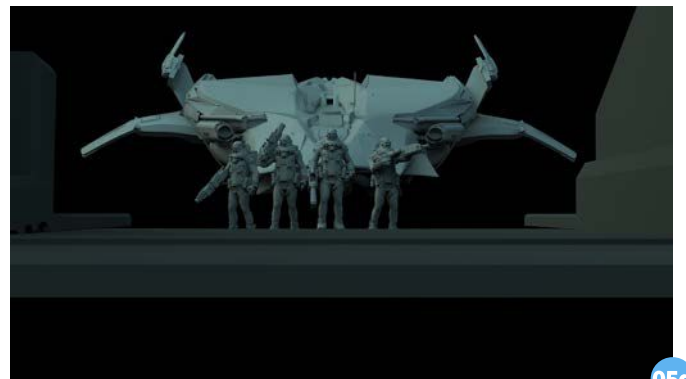
05a

05b

05c

05d

ship, put the characters in and we've got a good shot! 50-percent of the work is now done!

05 **Render the scene:** Now it's time to light the scene and make a base render for the project. For rendering, I use a very cool program called KeyShot. It is very simple, but it has huge hidden potential! I like to use it when I want to render a 3D scene and put in the final shot. It is also possible to experiment with light in the frame with the materials and you can get a great result!

I put the light in by using a different HDRI map and configuring it (you can see an example of setting the scene in figure 5a). Of course I try dozens of different settings and HDRI maps before I stop. It's very important to find the best solution for the composition. Also, in addition to setting the world the image is located in, I try different materials and various camera settings to find the best view for the composition. In the end, I do some final renders with different light and materials and turn on the mask.

06 **Combine the elements:** Now in Photoshop begins one of the most complex processes, when all that I've done so far needs to be combined into one whole picture. First of all, I spend a lot of time on the Internet, deciding which references to use, while thinking about the subject of the work and its
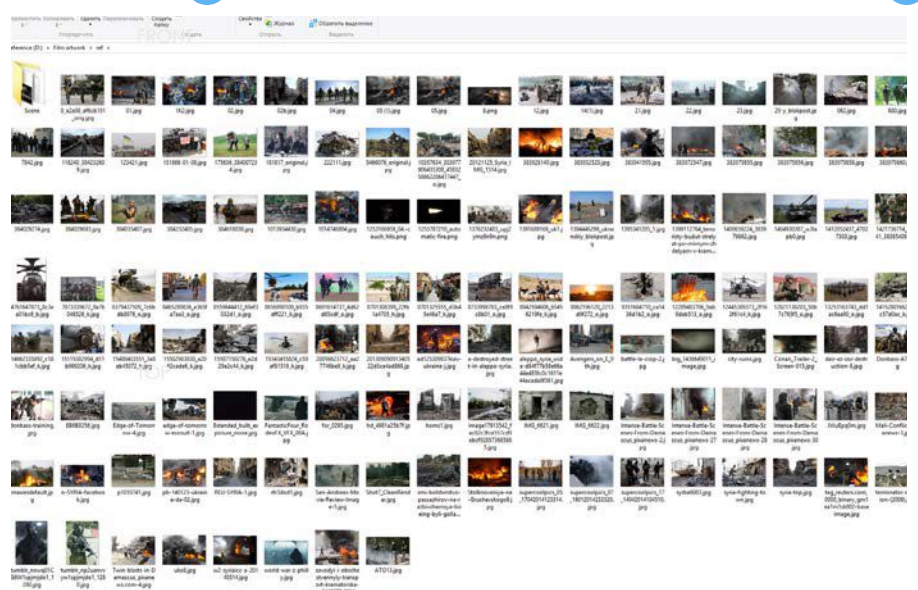

06a

coloring. I also spend a lot of time finding all the necessary photos and I collect them in one folder. I think that 90% of successful artworks depend not on how much you sit at the computer drawing the work, but on how you prepare for it. You need to put as much thought into the different elements as you can and get the materials to refine your work.

First, using the mask I did in the rendering; I remove the background and find a reference

for the blue sky. We need to create the right sky as the sky will be the main source of light, and it is not the details like clouds or birds that the viewer's eyes should rest on! This is very important to remember!

After each reference is added, I take the brush and paint the shape or color as I need. I usually work according to the rule 'from the general to the particular', that is; I do not only work on the characters or just above the background. Instead,

06b

BEFORE / AFTER
07
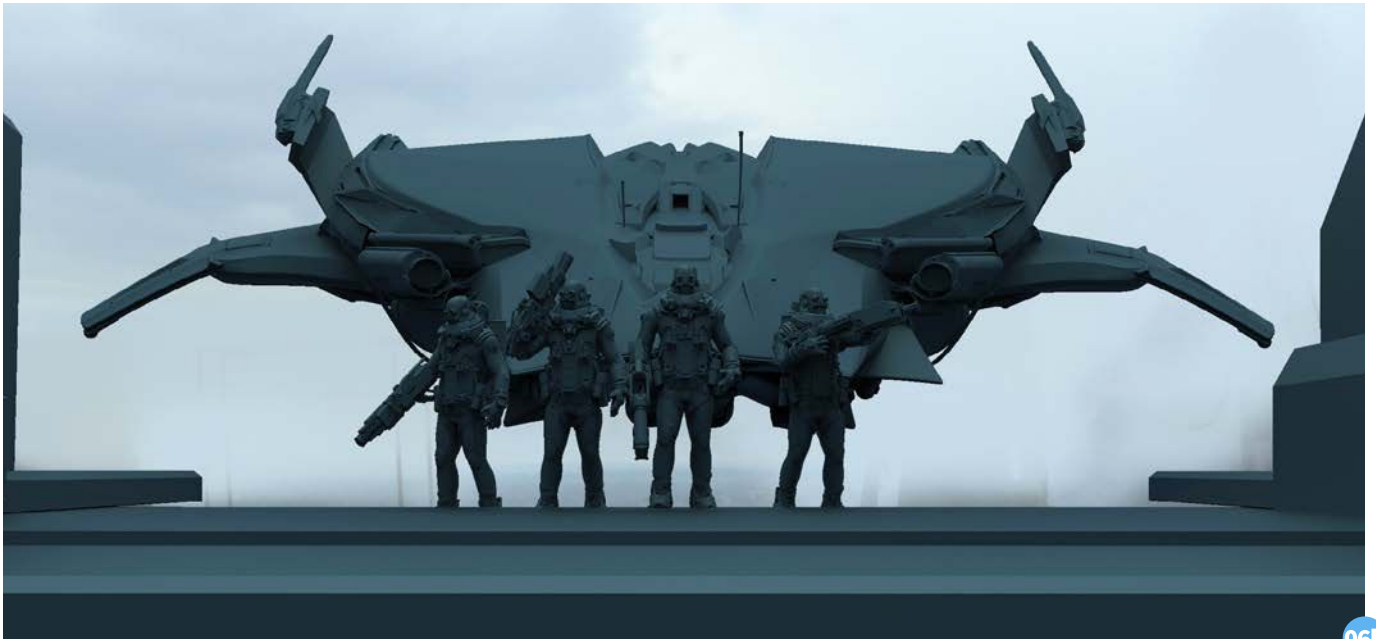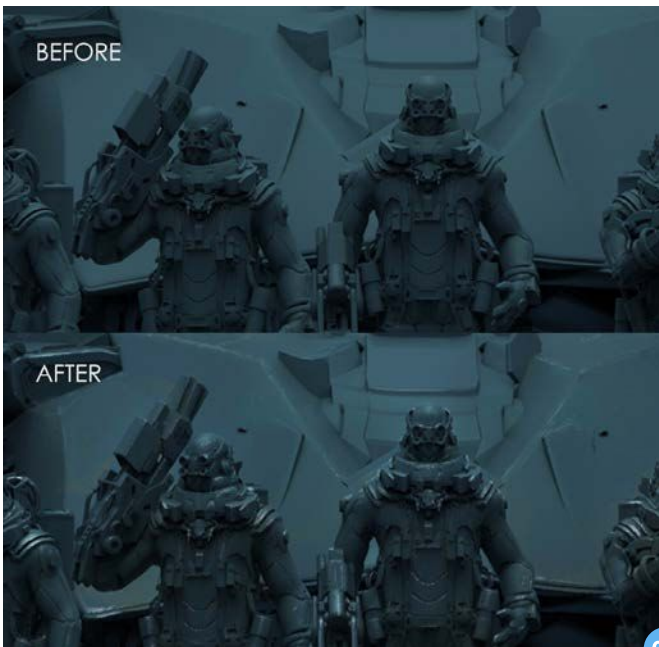
BEFORE / AFTER
08

I will draw everything together so that my eyes can keep a track of the balance, the colors, and the shapes.

07 **Paint scratches and dirt:** Now I paint scratches and dirt on the characters to make them look more impressive in this ruined city. Scratches and dirt are a good way to complicate the materials on your characters and make them more interest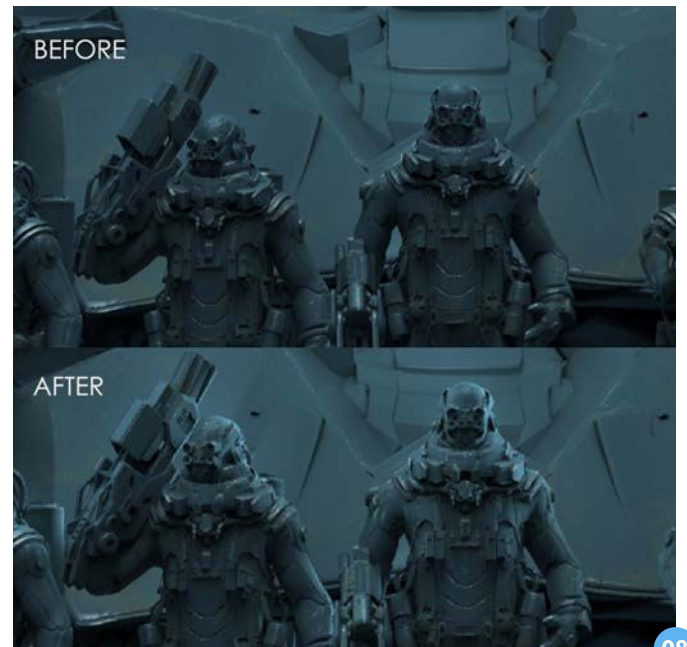ing. It is important not to paint scratches and dirt in places where it is not needed. It is only necessary to draw these details in those places where there is likely to be attrition material or contamination.

08 **Pay attention to light:** Then I start to think about my characters on the ship. The main source of light is the shine from the sky.

In this picture, there is no sun, and it is overcast, and the light from the sky neatly highlights my characters and my ship on the top, and a little bit on the sides.

Too many young artists make mistakes with light. If you have the wrong light source and do not know or think about the weather in the work, the shadows will fall in the wrong direction. ▶

05a Set the scene in KeyShot

05b The settings for the render

05c Tryout different settings for your composition

05d Consider how the light will affect your composition

06a When looking for references, consider the subject and coloring of your work

06b Add a sky which will be the main source of light

07 Before and after scratches and dirt have been added to the characters

08 Highlight the areas that are hit by the light, such as the top and side of the head
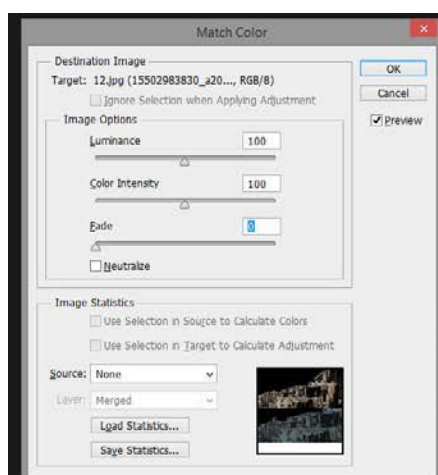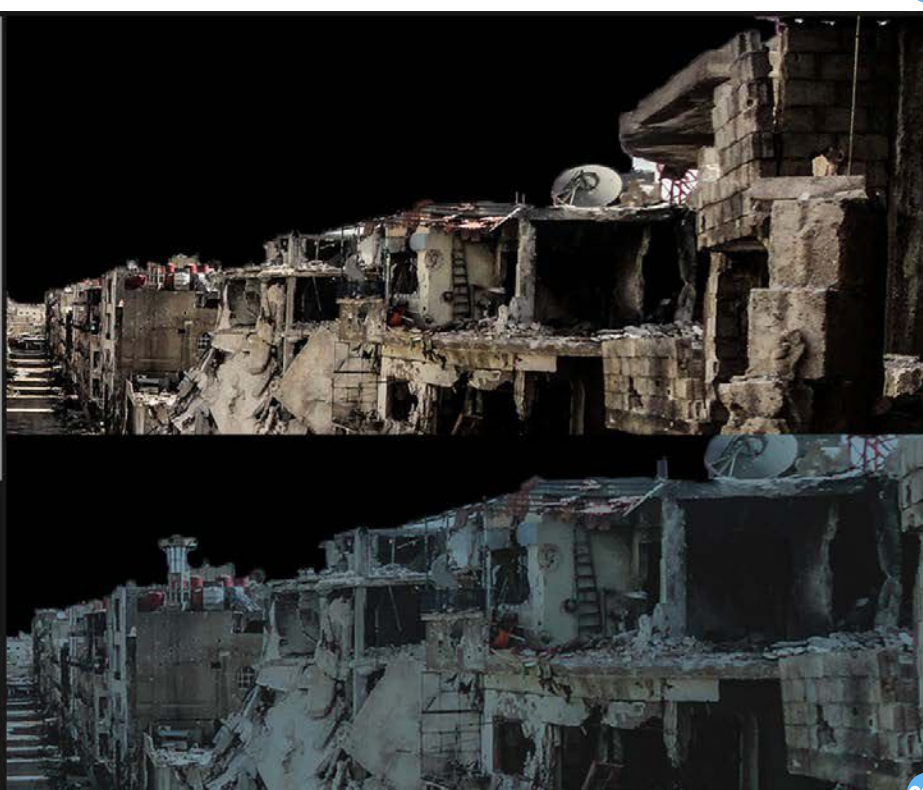
09a

IMAGE - ADJUSTMENTS - MATCH COLOR

09b

10a

09 Add background details: I start to add to the details and the background of the scene. I correct the design of the ship, add a little emphasis on the characters and create a suitable environment for the ship and characters to be located in.

To all my references, I make the colors the same and suit the environment. I use tools such as Match Color to do this. You can find this by following Image > Adjustments > Match Color.

Just sometimes I use the Color Balance (Ctrl+B), and Hue/Saturation (Ctrl+U). These tools are enough to change the color of the subject and become part of the whole. Of course every reference needs to be painted, to remove the details and noise from the photos.

10 Build up the scene: Little by little, I add more details into the scene and objects. It is important to add your references of objects so that they seem a part of your picture, and not individual pieces. Adding details needs to be done intelligently and should not overload one part of the picture with a lot of detail.

11 Detail the characters: Now I think the composition of the scene is good and there is no sense of imbalance from the details. I return to the characters and add the military color scheme to them and some more details. I take ▶

09a The scene comes together when background references are added

09b All the references are adjusted to suit the scene

10a Continue to add detail to the scene

10b Try not to overload the image with extra detail

11a Before and after details are added to the character's uniforms

11b The scene now looks much more complete

11c Use the Lighten tool to give a sense that there is more space between the viewer and the scene

parts of my characters from the ordinary soldiers in uniform.

Now I just need to finish a little ship, and create a sense of aerial perspective. I create this feeling

of aerial perspective using the usual layer mode Lighten. Remember that the further away from the camera the objects are, the greater the amount of air they fill and the less detail you need to put on them.

12 **Create fire:** Now, at this stage of the project I do not have any feeling that there has been a war. I think I need to add fire, smoke, and various small elements. Fire, smoke, and ash; all of this creates a sense of the

12a

"Add contrasting details like fire very carefully so that they help ground the main elements into the scene but do not break the composition excessively"

destroyed city. It is necessary to add contrasting details like fire very carefully so that they help ground the main elements into the scene but do not break the composition excessively.

I add still more smoke and more fire, and small details in the scene, such as badges, signs, graffiti on the stones, and the elements of the ship, giving less detail in the background.

13 **Final touches:** In the final stage, I add a little more detail to unite all the layers together with the arrow keys (Shift+Ctrl+Alt+E) and add contrast to the work. I also keep checking the balance of detail and color as I do this. I use the Sharpen filter for sharpening


12c

boundaries, which makes the scene clearer. In the foreground I add the Iris Blur effect.

Finally, I add more contrast using Color Balance to help achieve the right colors and shades. I also use the filters Sharpen and Noise. And that is the whole process of working on this project! I spent six days on this artwork. I hope it has been interesting to read how I got this result. Thank you for reading! ●

12a **Gradually begin to add fire to show that it is a war zone**

12b **Add smoke and ash for realism**

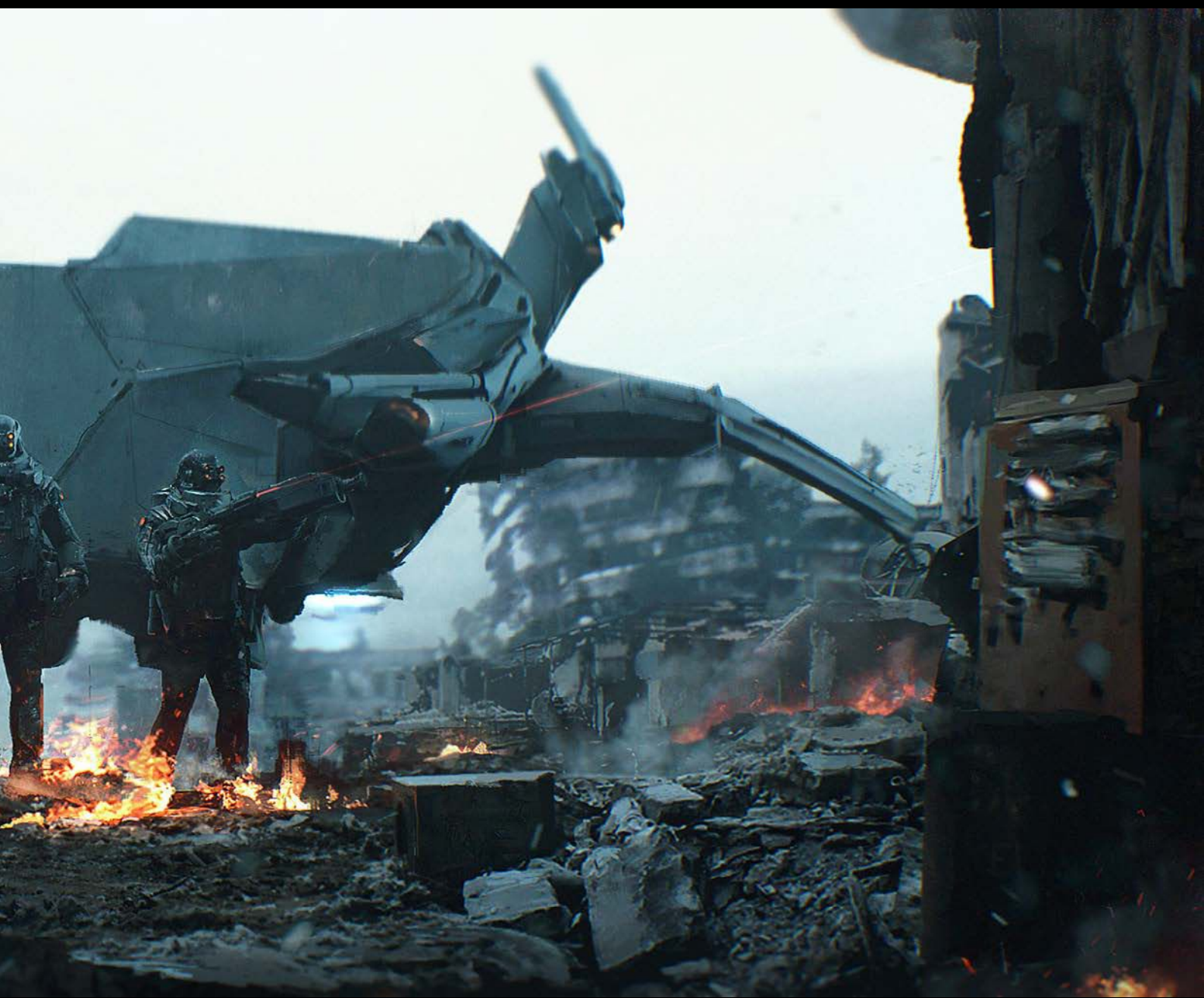12c **Intensify the fire and add small details to the characters and ship**
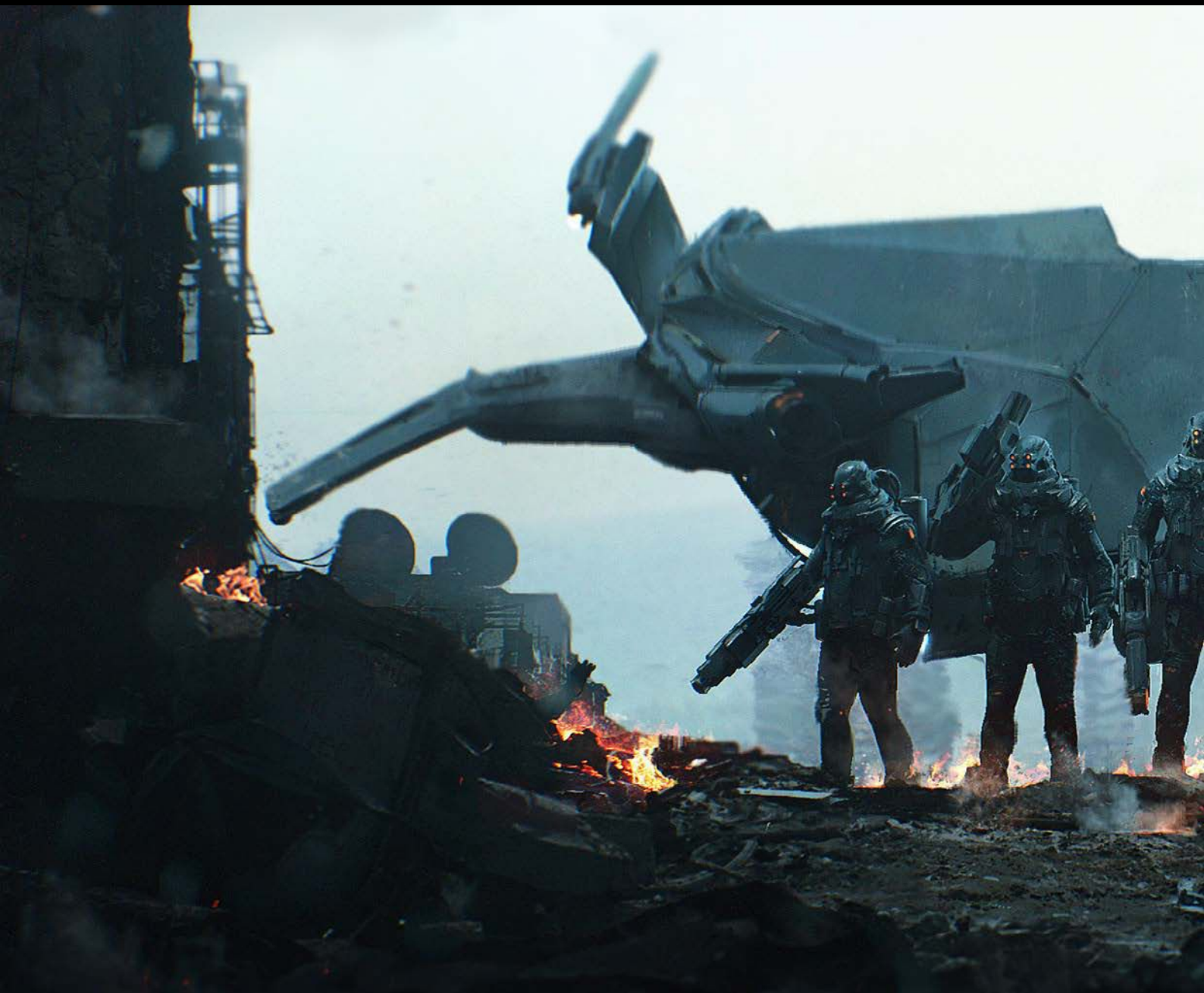
The Artist

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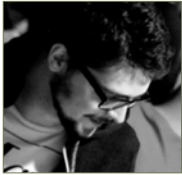3dtotal customer

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The Artist

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Software Used:
Photoshop

Oliver Odmark is a London-based concept artist working for Rocksteady Ltd. He studied 3D graphics at Playground Squad in Falun, Sweden which introduced him to the videogame industry.

Create a robot droid

Paint a functional droid with human character traits in Photoshop with this tutorial by game artist Oliver Odmark ▶

Design a characterful machine with these handy tips...

In this tutorial we will go through the process of creating a robot droid character. I will be keeping things pretty simple and stick to the standard Photoshop brushes. Machinery and robots were never my strong side but I feel that approaching it as if it is an organic being will help a lot. It relieves any focus I might have on the actual mechanics that come to mind as soon as I think 'machine' or 'robot' and lets me just play around with ideas freely. Functionality in machines is important obviously but I want this android to first and foremost have character and a personality.

This tutorial will demonstrate just one of the many ways I like to approach work like this and a lot of the time my processes do vary. There are no rights or wrongs in this regard, but hopefully I will be able to spill some useful advice for any aspiring artists as we go along.

01 **Rough sketching and thumbnails:** Let's start off with the most important step (and the most fun in my opinion)! For me, producing a bunch of little sketches and thumbnails before starting a drawing is essential because it lets you pour all of your bad ideas out on to the paper so that you can reach the ones that are actually decent. Whatever idea lies on top of your mind is seldom the best one.

I draw up a couple of sketches using a simple Round brush with low flow to make the lines less 'sharp' and intimidating. This is the time to go crazy with your ideas. Go as weird as you like and try to cover a wide range of shapes and sizes. You may have an idea that you like in your head from the start, but trying different things might give you something to add to it that you hadn't thought of before. It never hurts to go through some extra ideas and it takes very little time.

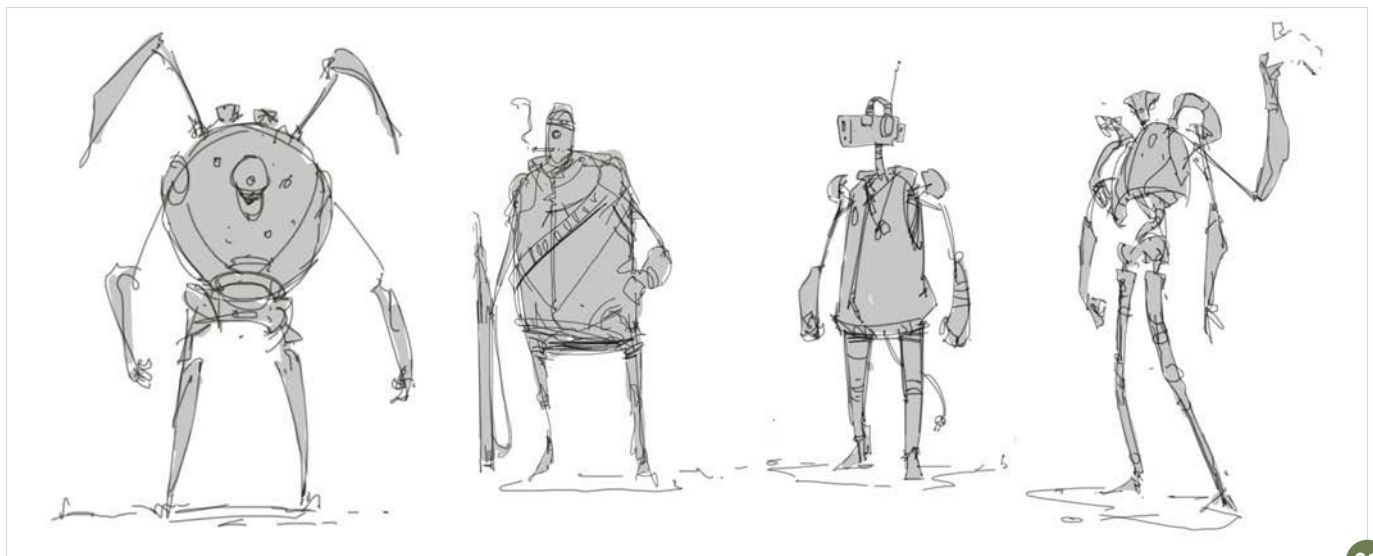**02** **Making variations:** One of the sketches looks like a bulb on two pointy legs

which I quite like so I make a few variations of this one. I try out a few different things and try to nail down most of the character design. Being happy with the sketch is very important. There is no reason to move on to the next stage if the sketch doesn't work!

If you are making a line-up of sketches or thumbnails for a client to choose from, try your best to make all of them interesting. Otherwise you might get stuck having to work on a sketch you don't like at all. ▶
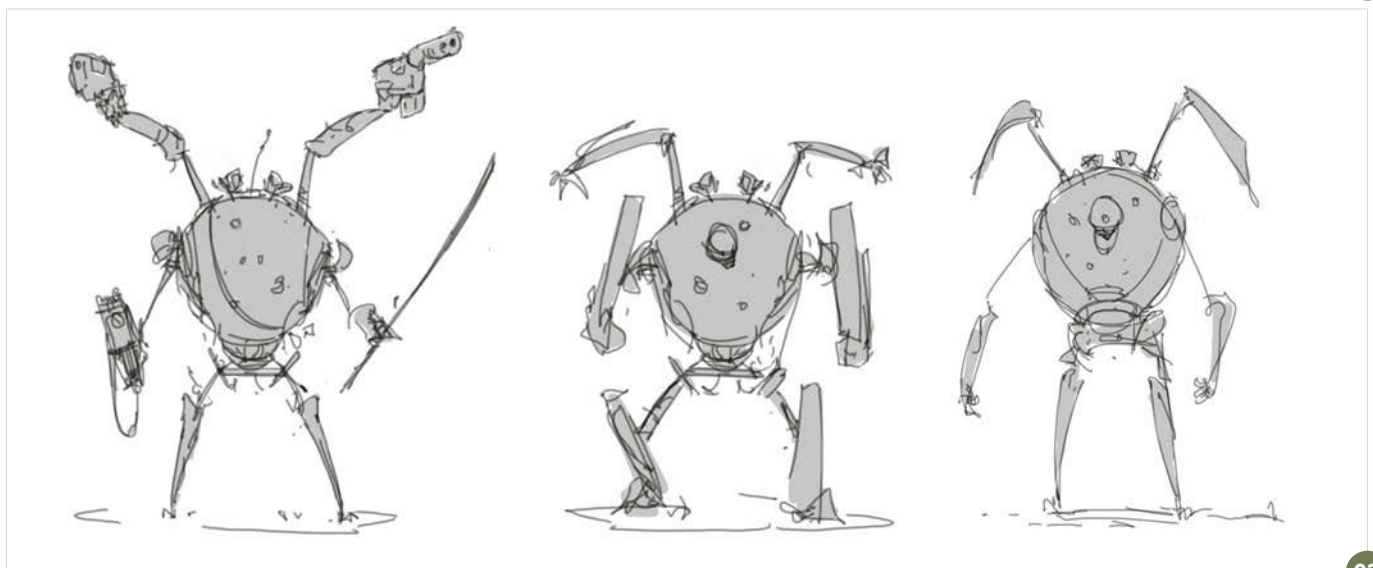
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01 Sketch out a few ideas exploring shape and size with a simple Round brush

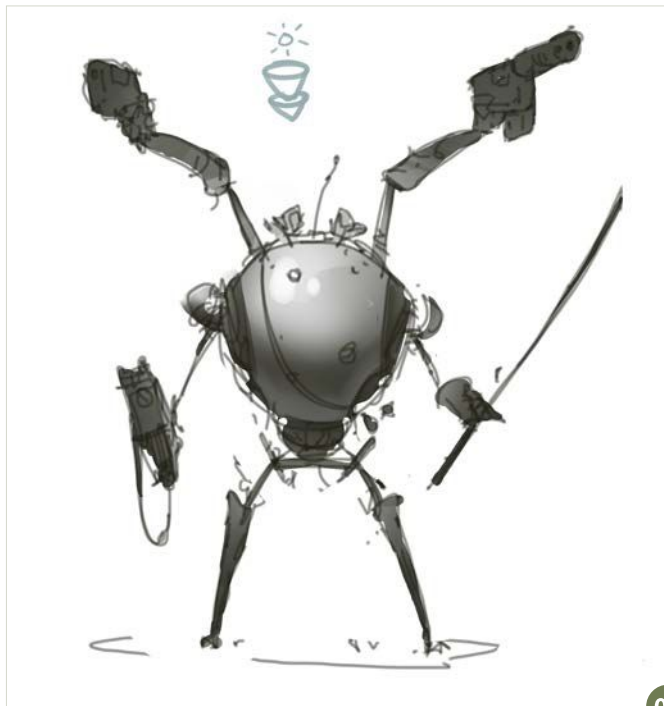**02** Take your preferred idea and work out the different aspects of the character design
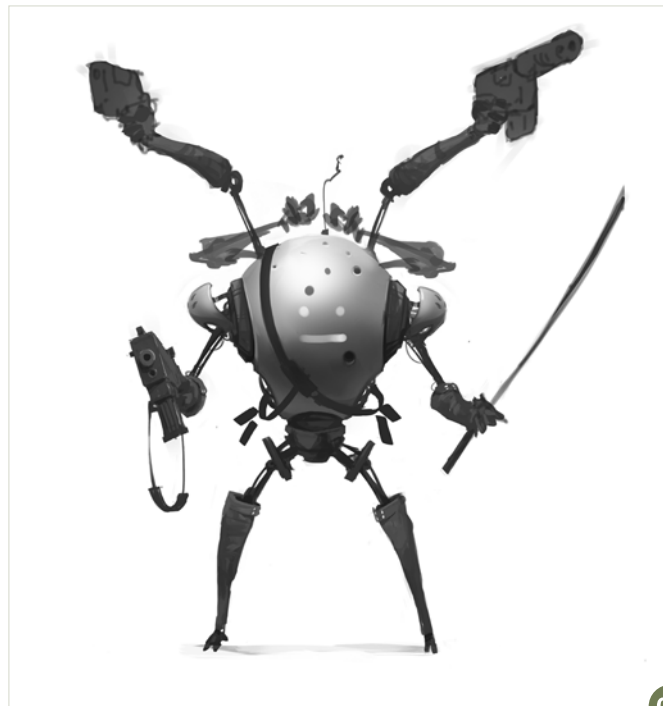

01

02

03

04

05a

05b

03 **Start with basic values:** I choose the left-hand image as I intend to make him into a cheesy Rambo-style robot! Machines and robots are out of my comfort zone and when I'm out of my comfort zone I tend to over complicate things. Therefore I am going to treat this guy as just any old character and not get too involved in the technicalities. Functionality is important with a robot and machine concepts, but we're not doing industrial design here!

I start off with giving my character some basic values. Since his arms are so skinny I mostly just focus on the bulb, his torso. This is obviously going to be the focal point so this is where I plan to put most of my effort throughout the process. At this point it's always a good idea to determine a light source so that you can keep it consistent for the rest of the process.

04 **Start adding details:** As I clean up my robot from the initial sketch I find, as I often do, that the design has lost a lot of its energy and character.

This happens more often than not and it's because the sketches are always more exaggerated. But I have got a good base to build from and in this early stage I can just go nuts and try out whatever I like. In fact, no matter what the stage, one should never be afraid to change things and experiment. You will never regret it if you work digitally. Just pop on another layer and go crazy.

I'm not going to go too crazy today however; instead I'll just try to flesh my character out a bit more. I try out a simple sprayed on face and an extra set of arms, complete with a belt of grenades! I'm happier with how this looks now. To put a shine to that metal bulb, a Color Dodge layer works perfectly.

06

07a

07b
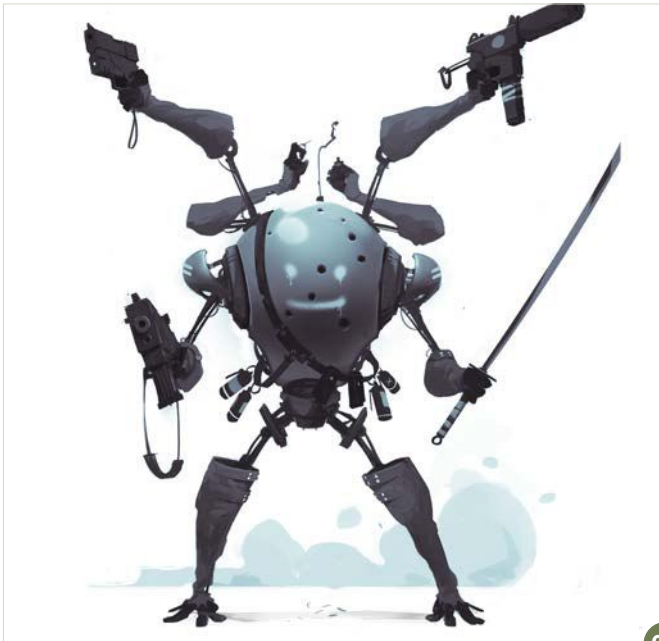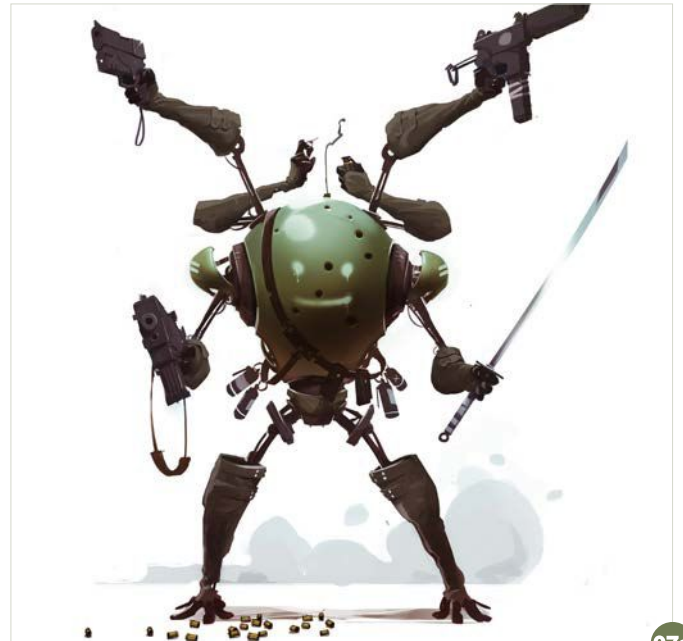
05 **Create a focal point:** The next step is basically just all about adding detail. At this point, I'm sticking to just the one layer. No need yet to get too precious about anything. Again, I make sure that my focal point gets most of the love.

I work it up to a point as I don't want to work it to completion in grayscale. I like to stop halfway through and start adding color. The reason for this is that I often find new challenges when I start coloring. By switching to color half way through I get enough opportunity and time to work in the color and get a more satisfying result.

I bulk up his arms and legs to make him feel more collected and not too all over the place. The idle arms don't quite work for me, so I want to put them to work too!

06 **Tweak the curves:** Before I create a new layer for coloring, I like to tweak the base color of my grayscale piece. To make the colored version richer in hue variation, I like to either color the whole thing in one base color, or tweak the Curves. Giving the base a hue of the opposite scale than the one you plan on using in your color layer works well, such as a base of orange for a character in blue and so forth.

This time, though, I am going to tweak the color Curves on this guy before creating my color layer.

I create a Curves adjustment layer and I start tugging at the strings of the red, green and blue channels to see what I might find. I make two points and drag them up and down in opposite directions to give my darker levels a different color from the lighter color. I get some blue in my
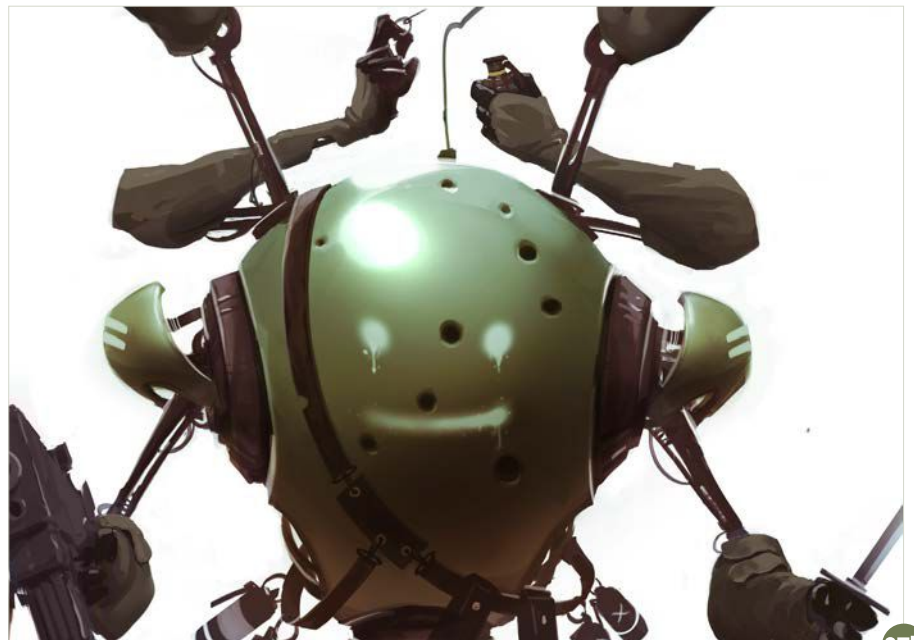
lighter color and some slight red in my shadows. This works well since it looks like the sky is reflected in the shiny bulb torso/head.

07 **Color layer:** I create my color layer and begin to add some green as a base to try to amplify the sense of warm red reflected from ▶

---

03 Set the basic values and decide on a light source

04 Once an image has been cleaned up it needs details to give it extra energy and character

05a Continue to add details but remember to leave some for when the image is in color

05b Add detail to the body of the droid and paint dribbles from the painted face

06 Start introducing color to the image with contrasts in the dark and light areas

07a The green color amplifies the sense of warmth from the red on the ground

07b Make the surface of the body look more transparent, particularly in the lightest parts

08a

08b

09a

09b
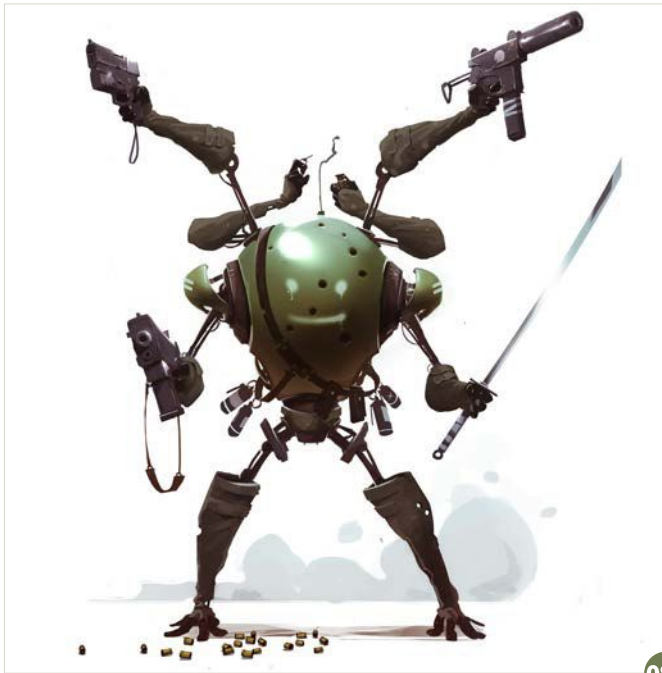
the ground in the same layer. I make sure not to use a solid brush but rather keep it slightly transparent so as to keep some of the underlying base color shifts there. I also make it more transparent on the lightest parts, as well as the darkest to save the shadows some color of its own and also to keep the look of the sky being reflected that I'm going for. Obviously on the textile material I can go in harder over the lighter parts because it's not as shiny!

Now I have reached a milestone in my creation. This is where I apply the image to a new layer and get back into working up some of the details. This time in color!

08 **Shadow and light:** I now have a pretty good range of hues to color-pick from. This will make it easier for me as I go along. The next thing I like to focus on is shadow and light! I turn my focus on to the different materials on this guy. His guns for example get some attention and I make sure to give them the shine they need.

Gathering different references for the materials and surfaces used in your image helps a tremendous amount! Understanding a material and it's reflection of light is essential, and there really is no reason not to study the subject you are painting a little bit extra! I also take some time to give my character some simple scenery. Nothing fancy but it helps to give you a clue as to what kind of situation you might find him in!

09 **Add a different color:** At this point I feel the character is getting somewhere but he is very bland. I add some contrasting colors here and there to make him look a bit more interesting. I want him to look military so he doesn't have a very interesting color scheme. I think he should sort of remind you of an old American soldier's helmet. So going with this, I decide to just add some spots of saturated colors here and there like on his grenades and clips and some blue cables. This will have to do. A little goes a long way in this case.

10 **Grime and dirt:** I've worked my character up to a point where he is almost finished and good to go! This is where my second favorite part of the process comes in (the first being the sketching of course). At this point he looks shiny and clean apart from a few bullet holes. I've kept him like this deliberately because it is much easier to rough him up from here

rather than to have to paint around any kinks or grime spots I could have added earlier. One step at a time!

So now I go on and I add the black burns around the bullet holes, the mud splashes on his arms and body, the rust and scratches on his guns and so forth. This, for me is the final step and I do all of this on a separate layer in case I have to go back for any changes in the future as so often happens. ●

08a Add light and texture detail to the character's guns and put in a little scenery
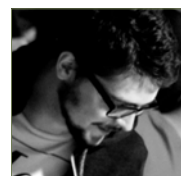
08b Little details like a shine on smooth surfaces are important to make an image look complete

09a Use contrasting colors, like the bright red and blue here to make the image more interesting

09b Some spots of saturated color are reminiscent of an old American soldier's helmet

The Artist

Oliver Odmark
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"These tutorials not only provide interesting exercises for the beginner to help build a strong foundation for drawing and painting, but also provide important insights into the mindset of a concept artist. Very useful and inspiring!"

Lois Van Baarle (aka Loish)

Digital concept artist & animator | loish.net

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characters

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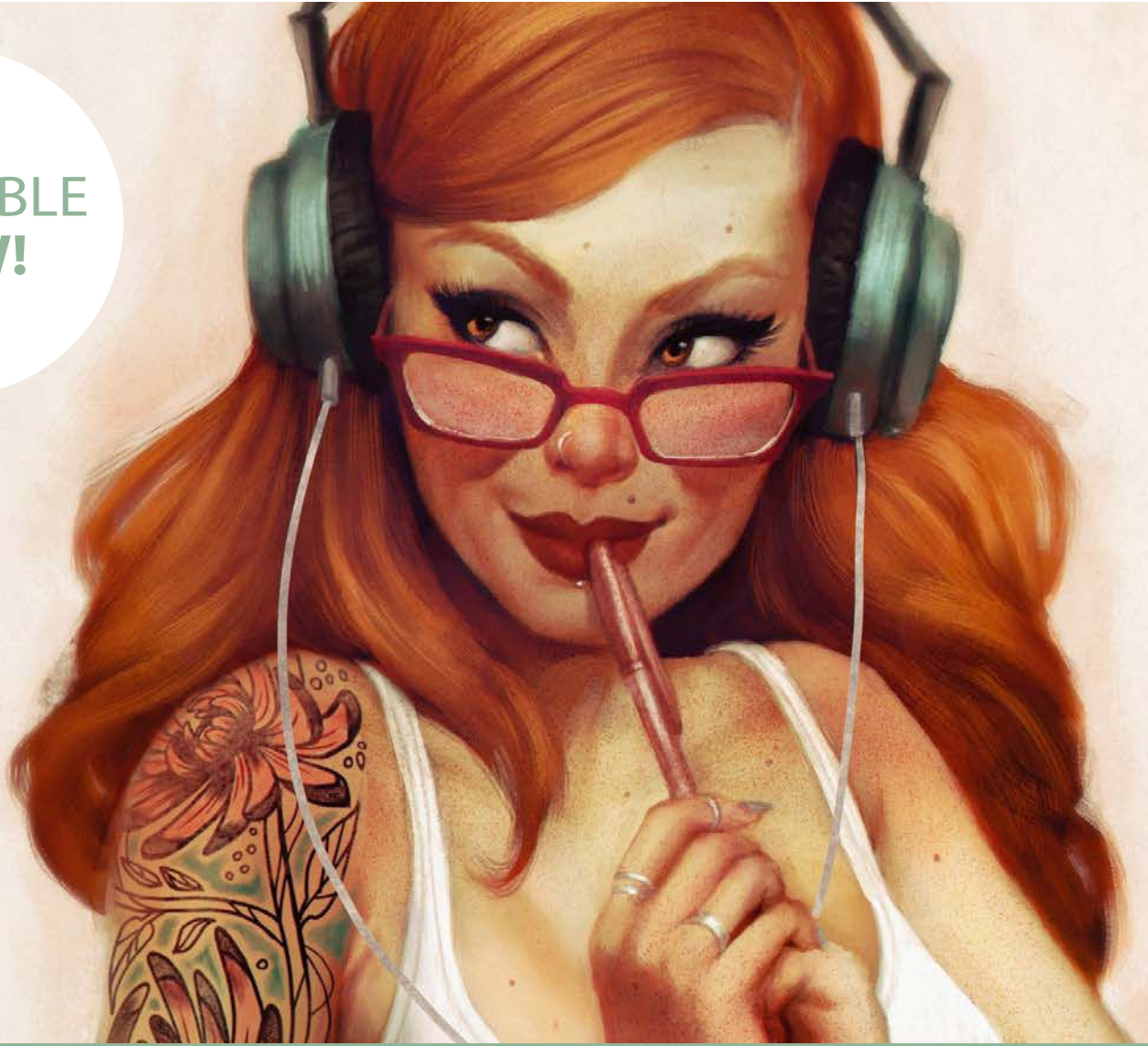
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The Artist

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Software Used:
Photoshop

Amir Zand is a freelance artist specializing in illustration and graphic design. He started his own studio in 2013, working on cover art and posters for books, games and movies.

Design a cyber-punk cop

Digital artist Amir Zand talks us through how he developed a character in an atmospheric cyber-punk scene ▶

Pick up some useful composition techniques...

In this brief tutorial I will go through my process for designing a female patrol officer in a cyber-punk atmosphere.

Starting with the basic composition which includes the preliminary silhouette for expressing the main idea; I will then show how the composition was refined by adding details to the background and the character.

You will also see how the right lighting and reflection helped to create a perfect cyber-punk atmosphere, as well as some important tips that can help you in the process of creating your own cyber-punk scene.

This tutorial is entirely based on the technique that I use for my own paintings. I always start with a vision in my mind's eye, but you will notice that the painting itself kept changing through the whole process until it evolved into the final artwork.

The composition may seem simple at first, but in the end you will realize that every aspect of the scene has played its part when framing the overall piece.

01 **Inspiration and ideas:** An artist can be motivated by many factors for creating an artwork, and inspiration is one of them; especially for the creation of personal work.

The inspirations for my paintings usually originate from my feelings and the external influences, such as videogames that I've been playing, or movies, music and artworks by other artists that I have seen. In this case, I was highly inspired by the game *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, and a song from Jetta called *Start a Riot*.

> "Composition is a language; a key for communicating to your audience. It affects every aspect of your artwork"

02 **Composition layout and brushes:** Composition is a language; a key for communicating your ideas to your audience. It can have an affect on every aspect of your artwork, including your points, lines, shapes and forms, lighting, colors, the position of your objects and the frame itself.

You should plan your composition from the beginning, and continue to improve it throughout the whole process.
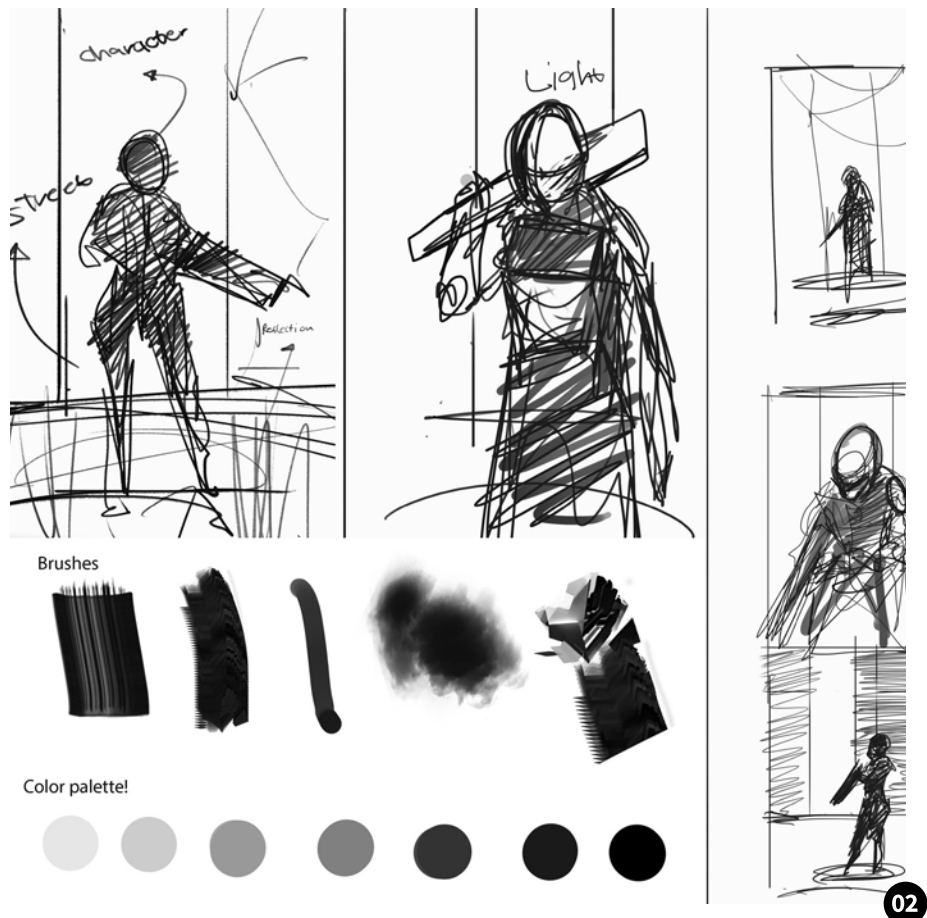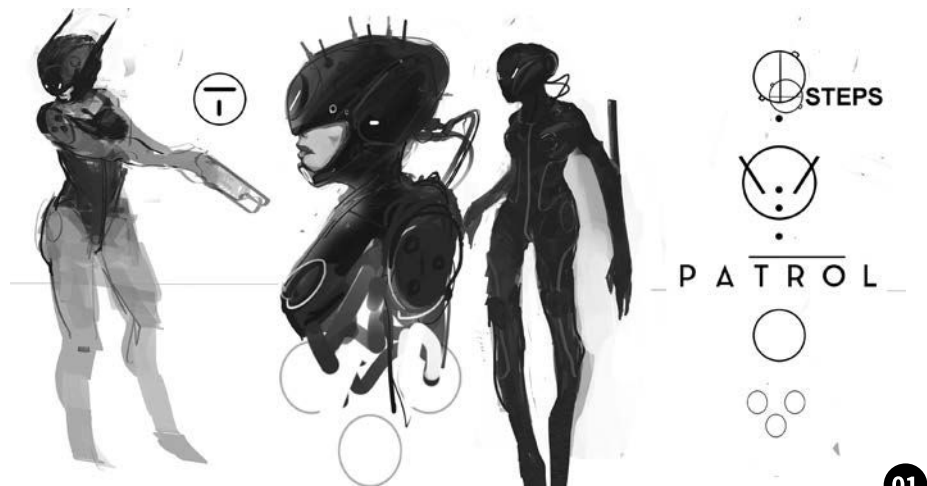
It is worth mentioning that this artwork was meant to be in black and white. I applied my own coloring technique using grayscale and excluded any other colors.

It is important to prepare your own workstation. Getting the right brushes was a crucial part of the process because it formed the technique of the work. I used clean brushes for *Patrol* because the main focus was the design and the details. I gathered my own brush table by modifying some of the downloaded and existing brushes.

03 **Silhouette:** The most common way to create a highly detailed artwork is

through drawing early sketches and refining them into clean lines. This potentially makes the whole process easier by defining everything from the beginning, but I like to avoid this as I believe it can impose a limitation on the evolution of the artwork in the later stages. ▶

---

01 Early ideas and sketches made when inspiration had struck

02 Plan the composition layout and set up the right brushes

Therefore, based on my early designs and composition layout shown in the first two steps, I started my self-expression by painting silhouettes to shape the main idea. Then I continued refining the rough shapes and forms by creating multiple variants of my main silhouettes. This was to make them more specific and understandable, and ultimately convert them into the main character and the background.

Similar to the way an artist works on a sculpture, I kept on refining the shapes and forms instead of erasing them and starting all over again. This way of evolving the silhouettes shaped the technique of my painting.

04 **Shapes and background refined:** At this stage, I had the silhouettes to demonstrate the main idea. Therefore, it was time to start refining the composition by adding depth to the background and cleaning the abstract forms. This made them ready for additional details to be added, and at the same time, refined the pose of our main character to help make it more specific.

By the end of this stage, I had a clear path for the composition that helps to identify the background, mid-ground and the main character through clear vertical and horizontal surfaces.

05 **Evolving the character:** At this point, I took a short break and once I came back, I realized that I was not yet fully satisfied with the pose of the main character. Therefore, I re-designed the pose and refined the anatomy of the body by altering the way she stands and holds the gun. This was the part when I started adding the first wave of details by partially designing her face and the helmet.

I should point out that I wanted her to appear less sexy and more serious. The helmet hides most of her face (which adds a mysterious touch to her character), and at the same time, revealing her human lips can indicate that she is indeed a person and not a robot.

Then I differentiated the surfaces of her armor using shadows and grayscale to add some more details to the outfit, while keeping the natural curves of her body. I wrapped this phase up by adding some wires to the foreground, which added to the composition.

06 **Background and cyber-punk atmosphere:** At this stage I started adding more details to the background. In order to create the perfect cyber-punk atmosphere, I wanted the image to take place at night where

03

⚡ PRO TIP
Managing your details

At the early stages of creating artwork, it is better to avoid centering your focus on one area while neglecting the other parts. A better solution is to make progress on all areas at a steady pace, until you reach a point where some parts of the image do not require any more details. Then you can start focusing more on your subject.

This helps you to have more control over the entire artwork and avoid excessive details in unnecessary places, by keeping the background rough and simple, and redirecting most of the details to your subject that attracts the most attention. This can save you a great deal of time.
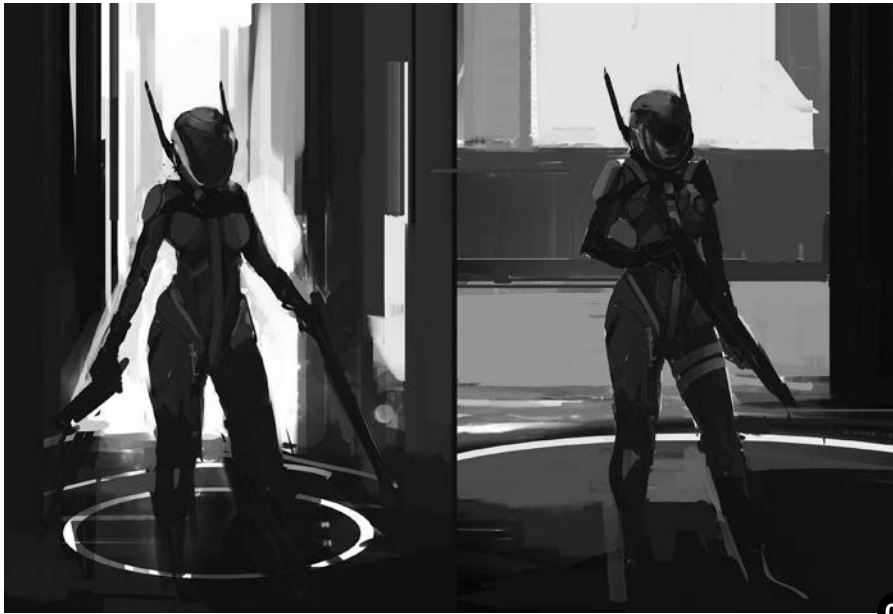
there are various light sources, along with many reflections to give the impression of a wet environment (as it appears after rain). I believe lighting and reflection play an essential role in creating a sci-fi/cyber-punk atmosphere.

Additionally, I drew two figures in the background to display the distance and perspective, then I ▶

03 The progress of painting early silhouettes, and transforming shapes and forms to make them more specific and understandable

04 Change the pose of the character and refine the background

05 Correct the anatomy and differentiate the layers to make it easier to work on each individual part

06 Adding lights and reflections to the background surfaces using photo textures and custom brushes

07

08

added some lights to the distant buildings to make them appear as windows, and I completed my scene with some reflective surfaces which I made using the Dodge mode brush.

07 **Field of depth:** After refining the background and the atmosphere, I wanted to make the main character more visible against the background. By adding more contrast to it, I created a better composition.

Adding some steam and light behind the main character helped to differentiate the background and the mid-ground for a stronger emphasis on the subject, while enhancing the atmosphere at the same time.

Then I added more design elements to the subject, such as dot patterns on the suit and graphical elements on the helmet. Additionally, I did some corrections to the lights and shadows to further differentiate the surfaces on the character's body. These small graphical details made the character's outfit much more unique and stylish.

08 **Give it a break:** At some point of time, I always try to take my eyes off my computer and come back to it after a while. Then by flipping the image horizontally, I can point out any remaining issues in the composition and character's anatomy.

⚡ PRO TIP
Lights and reflection visuals

There is a simple and fast trick for adding lights and reflection visuals in a background. For this you can either mirror parts of your image vertically, or paste a photograph texture of a city with lots of windows and lights. Then change the layer mode to Lighten, Dodge or Screen (depending on the kind of visuals that you want). By applying these layer modes, you can get many different types of effects.

At this point, the image may appear distorted, and you need to start removing some parts of the lightened image using the eraser, only keeping the parts that fit your artwork. It is a speedy way to add visual effects and enhance the atmosphere.
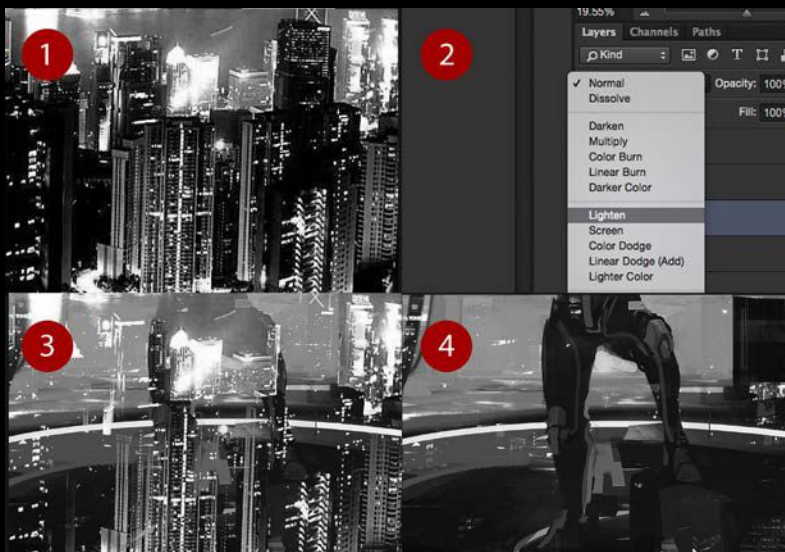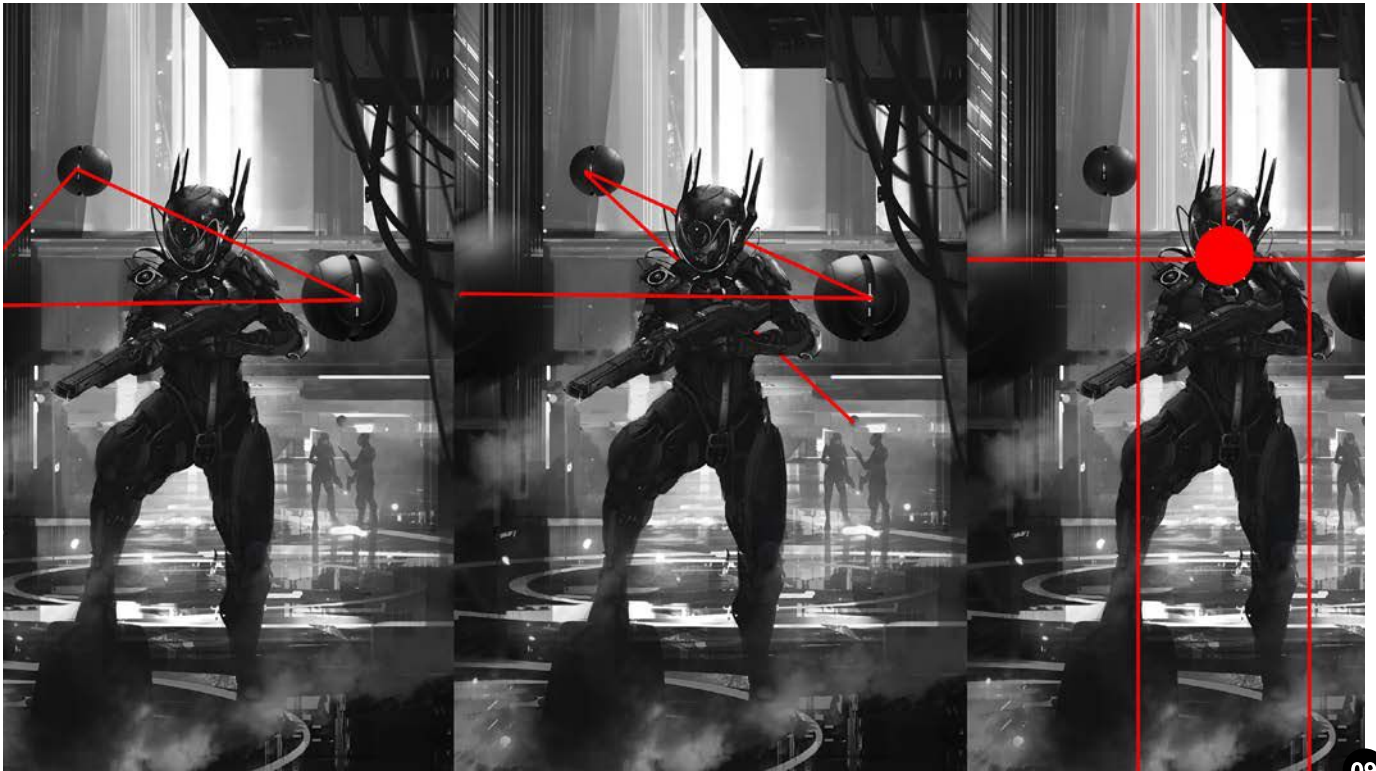
In this case, I realized there are some minor issues which required corrections, such as the way that she holds the gun and the way that she stands. Afterwards, I increased the contrast by improving the lights and shadows. I finished the stage by adding the last wave of details to the gun, armor and helmet.

09 Composition improvements:

Composition has many objectives, and the major one is to highlight the subject. I noticed that there were some objects missing in the composition that could help draw attention to my subject and fill the atmosphere. Therefore, I added three drones around the character to improve the composition.

These drones form a tight triangle around the character, and the helmet attracts the most attention because it is placed between them. The distance between the drones also adds a depth to the image and demonstrates the perspective of the artwork.

In addition, by applying a motion blur effect to the drone located in the foreground, I added the impression of motion to the static image.

Moreover, the character is placed at the center of the horizontal axis, and the helmet is located at the one-third of the vertical axis. These are both ideal locations for the subject in any composition. I made the final refinements to the suit of the character and the background of the image by modifying the wires and adding more steam to it.
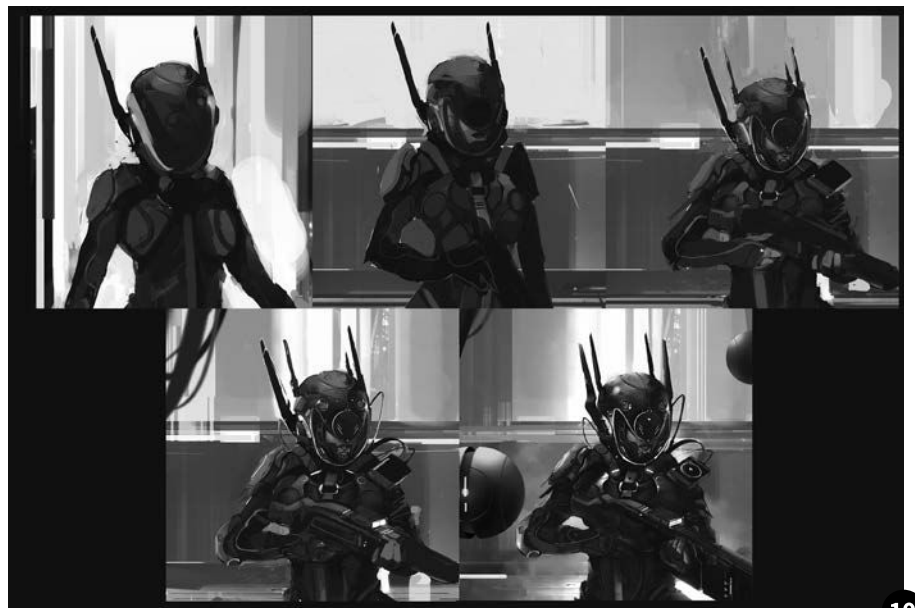
10 Rendered work: By this stage, the

artwork is almost finished, however I realized that I wasn't quite happy with the gun of the character, so I made adjustments to the design of the gun to a make it look more kick-ass.

Finally, I flattened the layers and added more sharpness to the parts of the image that needed to attract more attention (like the helmet, suit and gun) with the Sharpen tool.

Lastly, I added some lights around the character using the Dodge tool to enhance the contrast. The image was finally ready, and it was completed by adding my signature. ●
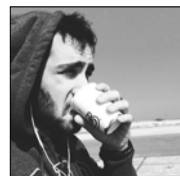
07 Add steam using custom brushes and apply Motion Blur to it, as well as adding particles and adjusting the contrast

08 Flipping the image, correcting the pose and improving the details of the gun and the character

09 The placement of the drones improves the composition and perspective

10 The transformation progress of the character

The Artist

José Julián Londoño Calle

artstation.com/artist/
handsdigitalstudio

Software Used:
Photoshop

José Julián Londoño Calle
is a graphic designer and
university lecturer. His
projects include work for Xbox
One, PS4, and educational
videogames for the Ministry of
Education, Columbia.

Create a light filled magical forest

See how José Julián Londoño Calle created this captivating forest
scene by focusing on perspective, creating masks and allowing the
scene to emerge naturally ▶
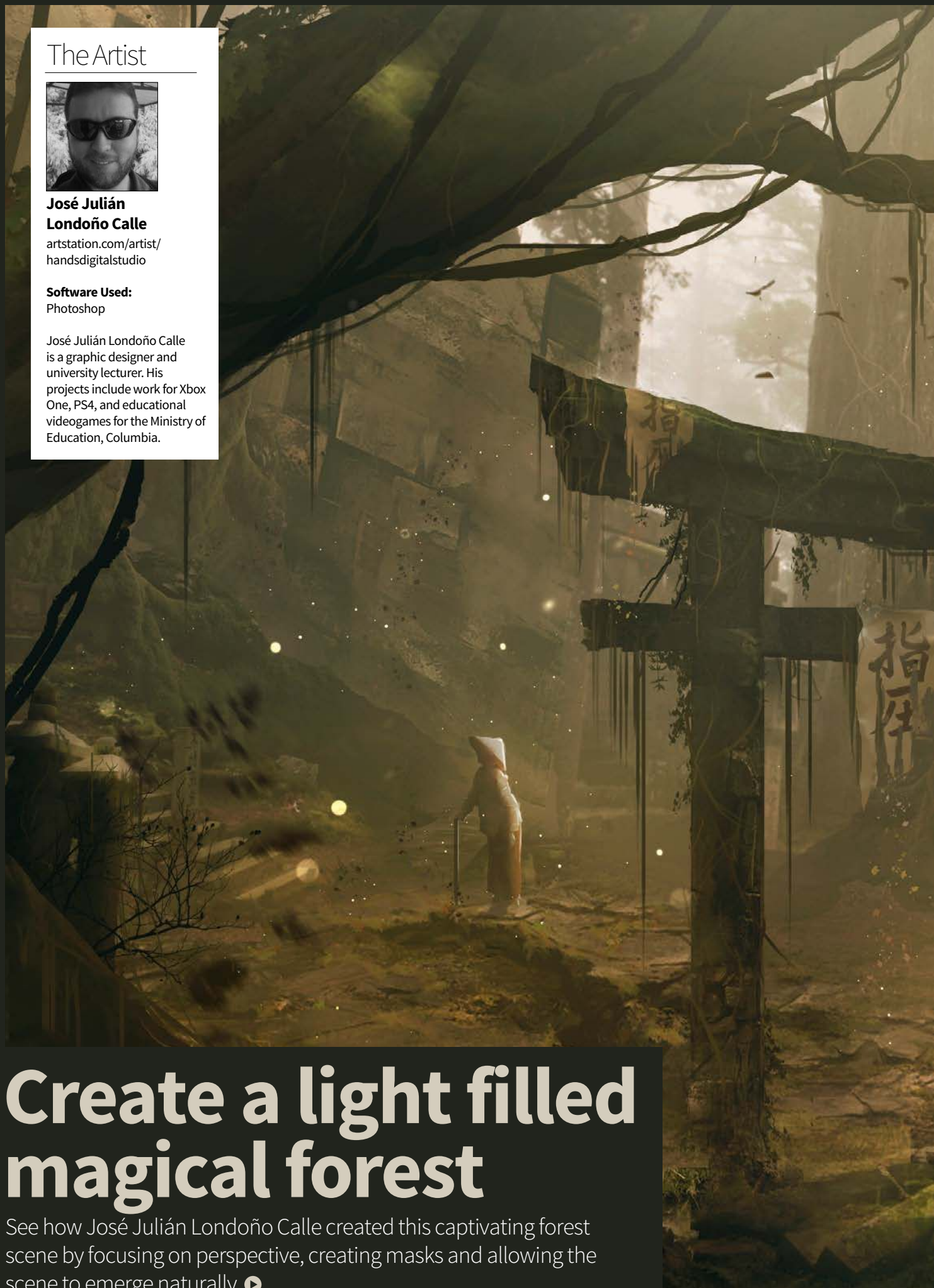
Discover top tips and techniques for creating an atmospheric scene...

In this project I cover the handling of textures and brushes which can be used to try to communicate an ordinary place like a forest from a magical and surreal point of view, by emphasizing the warmth of the light and the natural forms altered by man years ago. We will pass from the line to paint and texture, looking for depth in the environment and various roads where we are able to dream and think about discovering the forest.

The composition of the concept was framed in a scenario for a film where we seek to create aesthetic positions between the elements. I wanted to achieve an asymmetry in the composition that surrounds the path of the main character of the scene.

I thank you for reading my words; it is a great honor to be a small part of your learning.

01 **Finding the inspiration:** As with any piece of art, this was created from a specific moment of interest, in this case it was feudal Japan. I looked for photos with objects and patterns of design that transmit the local magic in the evening. These references give me the colors, the textures and the sensations that I wanted to express. The narrative was fundamental to
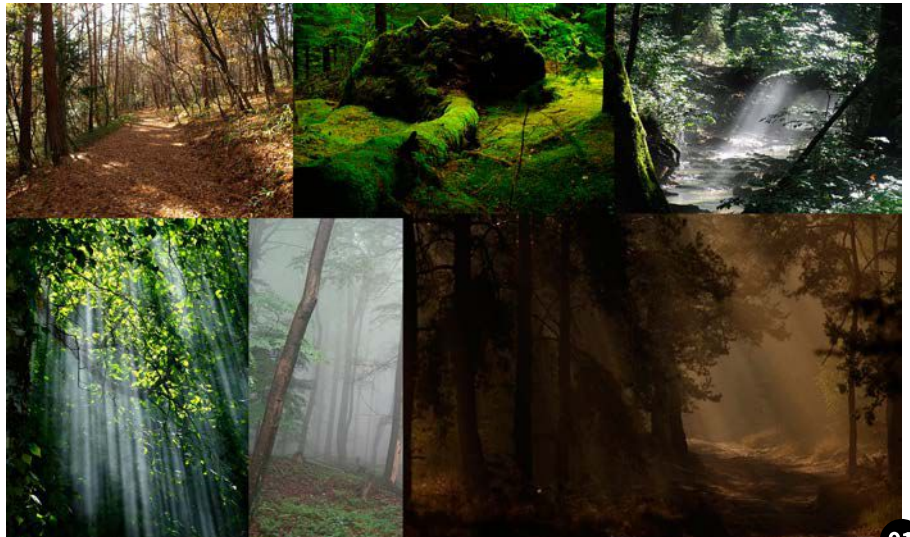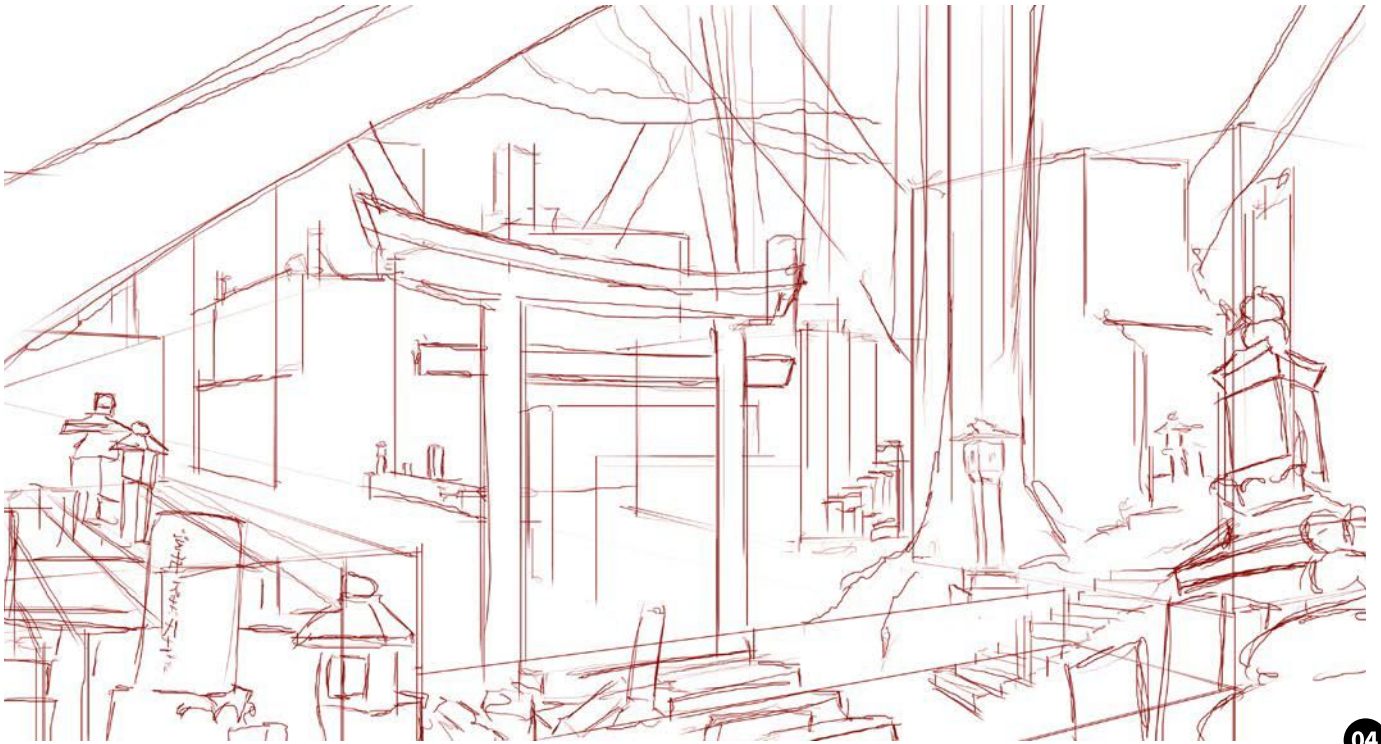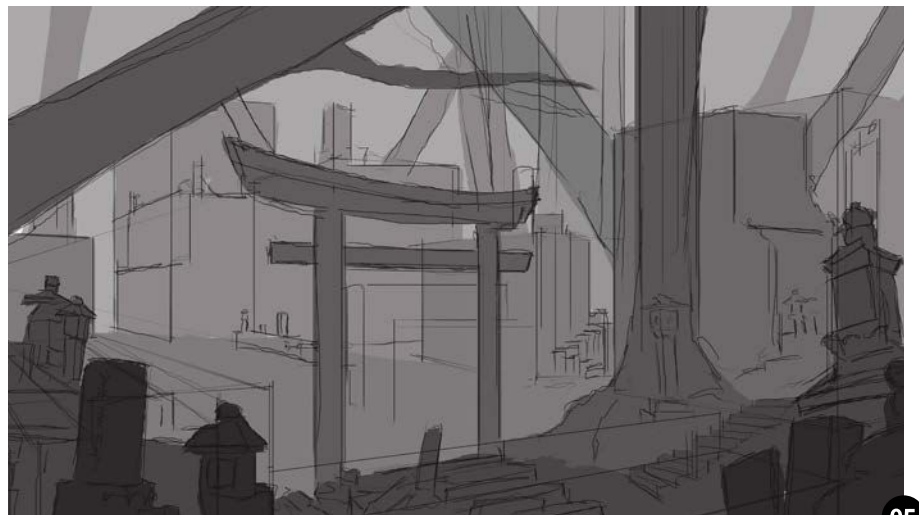

01
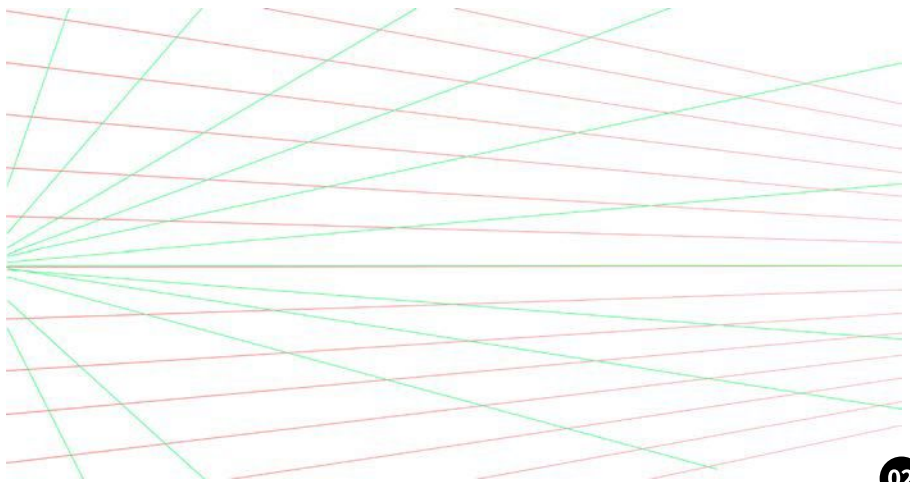
02

03

"The perspective was vital for my purpose; I noted carefully each object I drew, remembering that each shaft could be converted into force vectors"

the aesthetics of the image, so I dispersed the whole composition with objects that generated an emotive reaction. The images I chose were picked for the feelings that they convey of beauty, tranquility, solitude, abandonment and magic.

02 Creating perspective: To create perspective I worked with two points, with the horizon line dividing the image almost in half. I tried not to generate greater tension in the image by placing a perspective that only controls the relative reduction of the size of the elements. The perspective helps to generate realism in the concept by highlighting the depth.

03 Looking for resources: I looked for images that had extractable forms and details that could communicate to the observer the emotions I desired from the concept. Also, I gathered textures that would be used in the process. These selected images I later converted into textures and details within the composition which allowed me to create realism in the image.

04 Line sketch: I developed a composition using only cubes that would form the basis of the objects I wanted to create; these cubes became the critical items in the composition. It was important to me to create

details and try to be very clear about how I wanted the composition to develop. This stage should be done with confidence, and should show a clear idea of the work you want to produce. At this point the perspective was vital for my purpose; I noted carefully each object I drew, remembering that each shaft could be converted into force vectors.

05 Creating the masks: At this stage I created different masks with forms that used objects to give the levels of depth. The levels of gray indicated which objects were in the foreground, mid-ground, and the background.

These masks had been made in different layers for greater control of the separation between the objects by means of the atmospheres, particles and lights. ▶

01 A selection of reference images were chosen to reflect the tranquil atmosphere

02 Creating the perspective generates realism to the concept and aims to highlight the depth

03 These selected images are later converted into textures and details within the composition to create realism in the image

04 Sometimes a simple sketch is enough to transmit an idea

05 At this stage only the color planes provided a sense of depth
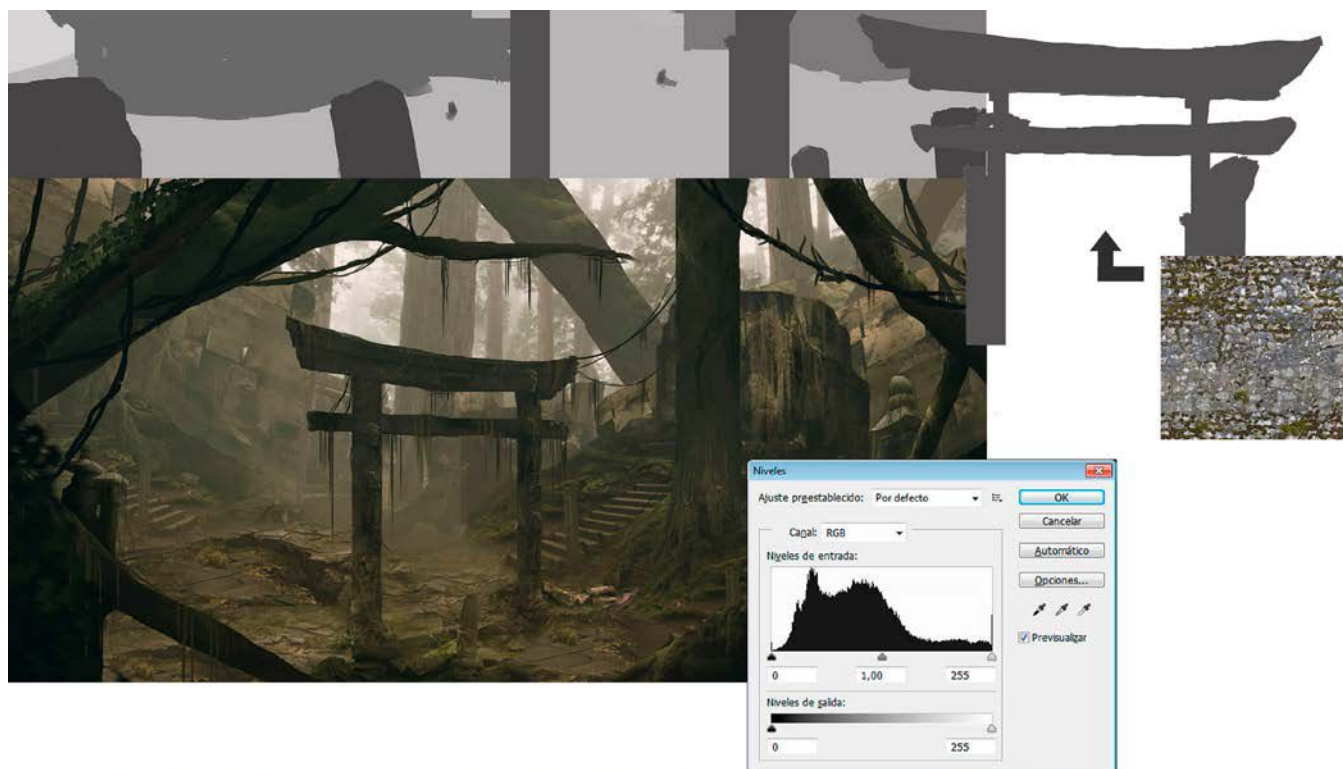
06

07

⚡ **PRO TIP**

Have fun, but be a professional

We must amuse ourselves creating our fantastic worlds as without emotion there is no design. Watch good movies, as they educate your eye and will help to improve your compositions. However, if you want to achieve good results you must have discipline and commitment; these two variables allow you to organize your priorities. It is important to always deliver on time, stay dedicated, and never stop studying or dreaming.
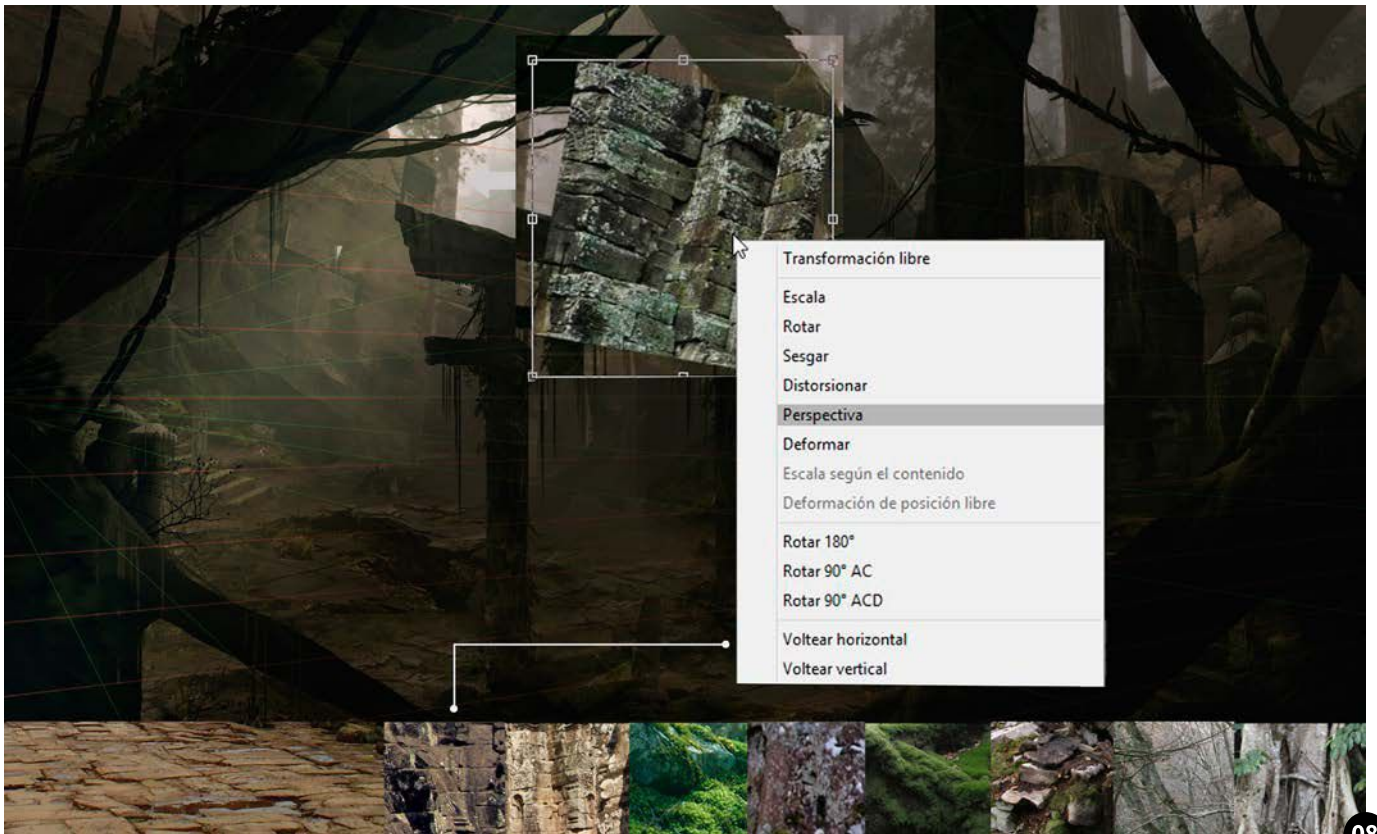
06 **Adding textures:** During this process I selected different parts of the reference photos and extracted the textures that would help to create the realism of the materials. I had all the main objects in independent layers, using the levels and balance of the colors to achieve uniformity in the general tone of the work.

With a Round brush, I drew atmosphere to separate the items; this atmosphere had a warm tone and filtered light, and allowed the silhouettes of the main objects to appear.

07 **Attaching the details:** The work contains a large number of details that I had made by extracting forms from photographs. With these I attempted to give rhythm to the piece and set the path of the character.

The beams of light generated an atmosphere of mystery, marking out key areas in the work. The glare on the floor determined the path that crossed the forest, directing the observer's eye to the magic that occurs in a forest in a given time.

08 **Texture and elements in perspective:** When adding elements and textures it is essential never to lose the perspective. In this case I used the Transformation tool and its alternative perspective in order to maintain the realism of the objects. I tried not to exaggerate the deformation of the elements, in order to keep the naturalness of the forms. I had been very

09

careful with the proportions between the textures and objects.

09 **Add details:** At this stage, I focused on the final render, balancing colors and looking for a relationship between them. I

brought in the character of an old woman viewing the forest. Details such as signs and fabrics are fundamental in order to generate a story behind the work. It is essential to place only the objects that allow you to communicate what you want, never forgetting the basic principles of the design. ▶

06 The details of lianas, plants and moss are developed with different brushes that generate dynamics between the elements of the foreground

07 There is a division of color in the image, the cool tones concentrated at the top of the image and the warm down, for example, on the floor

08 It is important to choose the textures with the best proportions that need less deformation, in order to maintain the natural feel of the piece

09 Whenever scenes like this one are constructed you must think about the design, and how it is communicated, to be clear on what you want to transmit

"I sought sensations of warmth or coolness depending on how I wanted to approach the concept"

10 **Lights:** I included calming colors in the layers panel, dispersed across the whole image. With this I sought sensations of warmth or coolness depending on how I wanted to approach the concept. For dynamic lights and effects; duplicate the image, deform it and apply an overexposure. Then apply a blur to the image to get the light.

11 **Final render and details:** This stage is where I left the work to emerge naturally. I added lights, particles, birds, light bounce and glitter; everything that serves to give a value of beauty and magic to work.

I concentrated on highlighting vectors of force and elements as particles to help me highlight the main elements of the design. An example of this is the character that was placed in the image, having found that it was the main protagonist of the work.

This work had a development time of three hours, but if you are just beginning your studies, the time should not be of any consideration. Take the time to do things well. ●

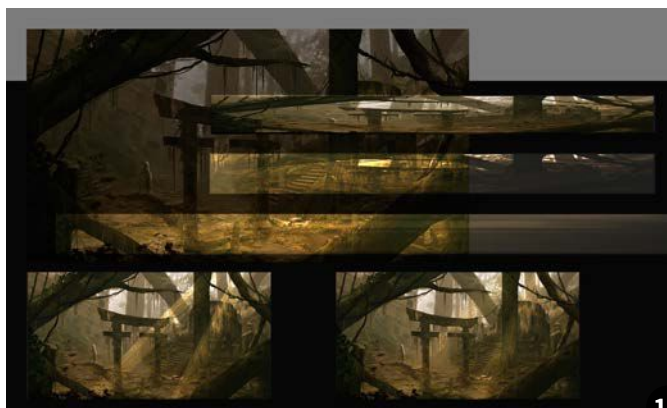**10** Add dynamic light effects to the scene

11 Now we have the finished scene!

The Artist

José Julián Londoño Calle
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10

⚡ **PRO TIP**
....
Looking for new goals

One of my personal goals is to become a matte painting and visual effects artist. My advice is to keep moving yourself, know your world and learn of their variables. In my personal experience, I devoted myself only to environments and sought all the time to increase my skills to improve my designs.

11

The Artist

Valentina Remenar
tincek-marincek.com

Software Used:
Photoshop, Corel Painter

Valentina Remenar is a digital artist from Slovenia. She creates vivid paintings in mostly an anime or semi-realistic style with dynamic compositions. She works closely with her twin Marina, also an artist.

My theme for this work was to create forest spirits inspired by Native Americans, the way that they are connected with nature and how they call their spirits. The clothing and some accessories were also inspired Native American design.

I also wanted it to be a fantasy scene, so I planned to create an anthropomorphic character; half human and half animal. I drew him bunny ears and an animal-like nose, so that he would look as if he is part of nature. For the deer and crow I added accessories, so that they would look more regal and spiritual.

I used Photoshop for most of the painting and then used Painter to create a traditional finish with visible brushstrokes which I couldn't quite achieve in Photoshop.

It took me sixteen hours to finish the whole painting and the biggest challenge was adding colors, because I wanted to use a colorful palette, but with earth tones maintaining the overall dominance.

Sketches and composition

I always roughly sketch the base idea on paper or in my sketchbook. I don't add too much detail to sketches, because I want to capture a rough idea first (Fig 1a). After I had finished my sketch I scanned it, and then played with it in Photoshop. The second and third sketches were then done digitally to set the composition.

I didn't entirely like the composition of the objects, so I decided to make another sketch. For this third sketch I wanted to create a simpler composition without the background and animals around the character, so both the character and animals would be in focus.
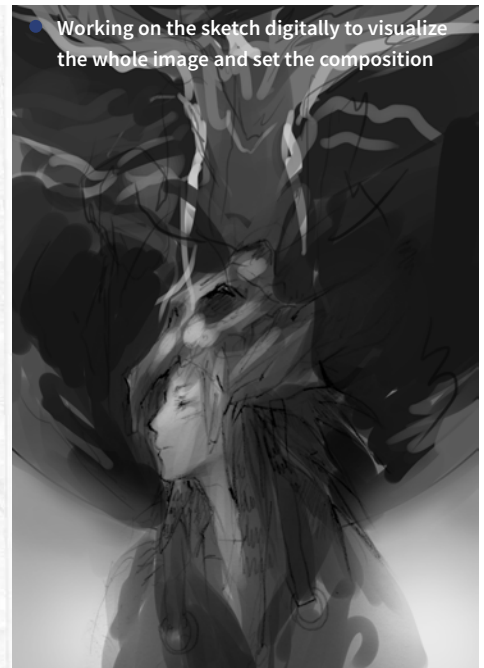
Brushes and patterns

The brushes which I used for this painting were basic Photoshop brushes, such as the Soft and the Hard Round brush as well as some brushes by Mathias Verhasselt, Dan LuVisi and Thierry Doizon (you can download them here: www.pandemoniumart.net/brushes/ and Dan LuVisi's can be found here: www.deviantart.com/art/My-Brush-Pack-118954791) (Fig 2a).

I used the Hard brush for drawing sharper surfaces and the Soft to smooth the sharp corners created by the Hard brush. I don't tend to use the Soft brush much because paintings can quickly become too blurry. To avoid this problem it is best if you don't repaint some areas which you drew with the Hard brush: the nose, eyes and lips, for example.
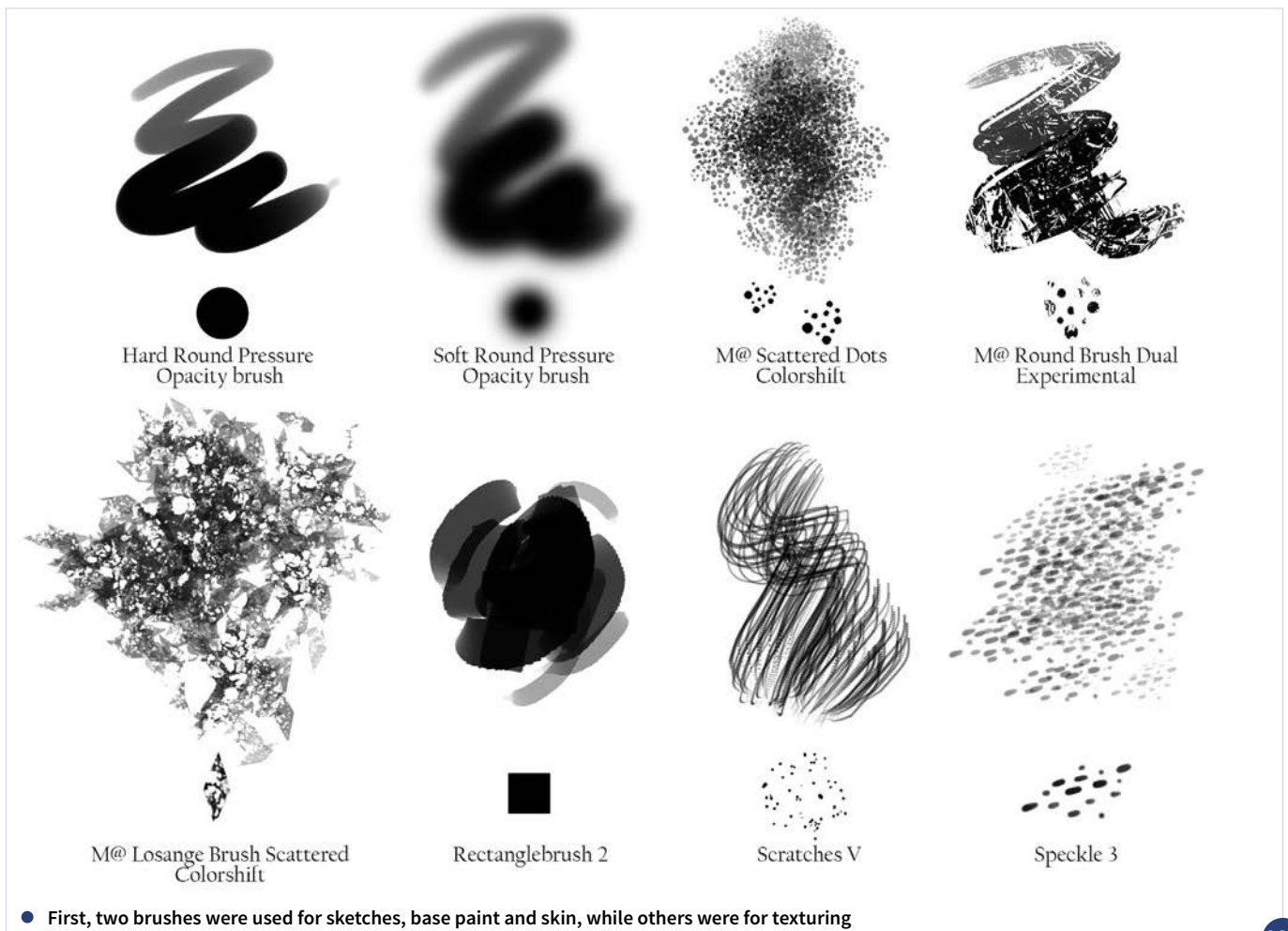
● Working on the sketch digitally to visualize the whole image and set the composition

● The preliminary sketch in pencil to establish the character's shape and design

● The third and final sketch ready for detailing

01

Hard Round Pressure
Opacity brush

Soft Round Pressure
Opacity brush

M@ Scattered Dots
Colorshift

M@ Round Brush Dual
Experimental

M@ Losange Brush Scattered
Colorshift

Rectanglebrush 2

Scratches V

Speckle 3

● **First, two brushes were used for sketches, base paint and skin, while others were for texturing**

02a

Other brushes were also used for texturing such as drawing metal objects, fur, skin and snow. When using brushes like these you can achieve nice results and are able to paint much faster. I edited the Flow and Opacity of the brushes, with flow always set at around 50% and Opacity varying to suit the purpose.

When I paint sharp objects I set Opacity to around 60-85% as opposed to around 35-50% when I want to smooth some areas. If you don't have textured brushes, a good way to get nice textures is to use patterns or photo textures (Fig 2b).
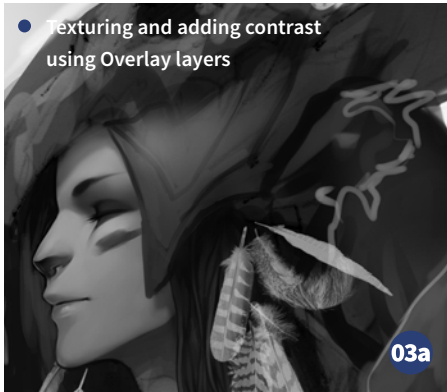
Drawing metal accessories and fur
Like the other elements, I painted a whole area with a gray base color and then added details using Rectanglebrush 2. This is sharper than the Hard Round brush making it perfect for drawing metal things. After drawing the details I added texture with M@ Losange Brush Scattered Colorshift (Fig 2a) on a new Overlay layer to make the helmet look older and more metallic.

I added a few layers with the same texture and the same layer mode to create more contrast. I also added highlights on Overlay layer to further the contrasts (Fig 3a). ▶

● **Valentina used a pattern to create the knitted effect on the sweater then changed the layer to Overlay mode and used the Liquify tool to add some creases**

02b

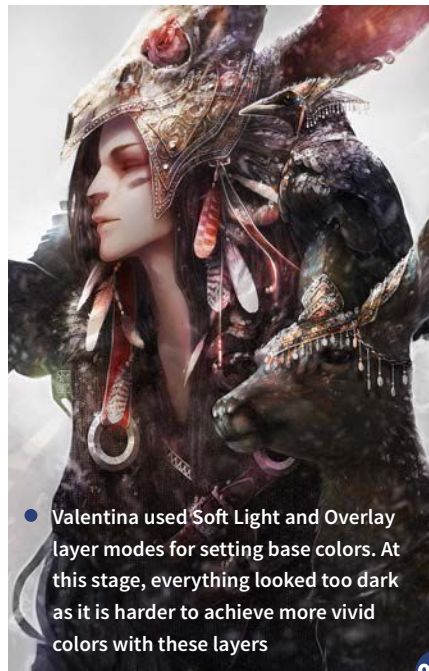● Texturing and adding contrast using Overlay layers

03a

03b

03c

● The base for the fur was created with the Hard brush and the details on the deer's nose were added with Rectanglebrush 2
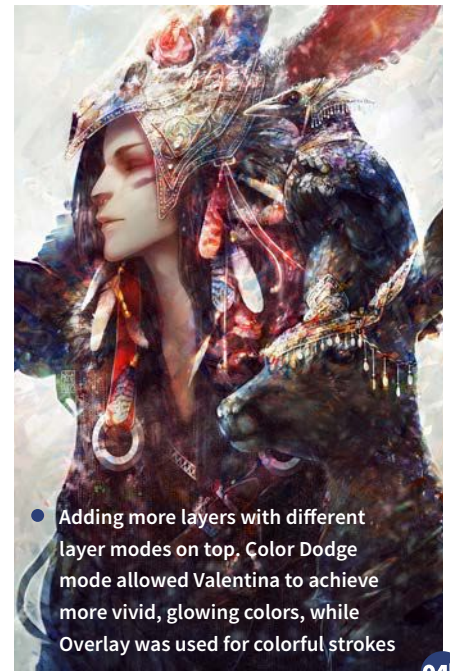
03d

● Valentina used Soft Light and Overlay layer modes for setting base colors. At this stage, everything looked too dark as it is harder to achieve more vivid colors with these layers

04a

● Adding more layers with different layer modes on top. Color Dodge mode allowed Valentina to achieve more vivid, glowing colors, while Overlay was used for colorful strokes

04b

I painted the deer with the Rectanglebrush 2 and Scratches V brush. Making a rough sketch with a Hard Round Pressure Opacity brush and Rectanglebrush 2 (with Opacity set at around 50-70%), before starting to add more detail.

The Fur was created with just the Scratches V brush (Opacity also around 50-70%) and I added some highlights and shadows on the Overlay layer (Fig 3b). The accessories on the deer's head were drawn with Rectanglebrush 2 with an Opacity of 80%.

Coloring the black-and-white drawing

When adding the colors, I started with Overlay layers and one Soft Light layer. I used the Soft Light layer as a base, while vivid contrast colors were added on Overlay layer mode (Fig. 4c). I also added a few vivid colors on the Color Dodge layer, which can be used to add colors over darker areas of the drawing which can create a colorful glow.

For the colorful strokes I used a few Overlay layers with all kind of colors, and I simply painted brushstrokes in all directions with Rectanglebrush

2. More vivid highlights were then added on another Color Dodge layer.

The painting still looked kind of dark so I decided to add colors to black areas on the painting too. I added them on a Lighten layer mode to create lighter shadows which meant I was able to make the painting as colorful as I planned. Then finally, after a few tweaks, it was finished!

A new style

I wanted to achieve a traditional look for this piece, so I decided to get out of my comfort zone and approach it a little differently. My work usually employs an anime style, but for this image I decided to use a more realistic approach to get better character proportions.

This painting received a huge amount of positive feedback from the community and I learned a lot about painting techniques which I will adopt in my future work.

Experimenting with my style helped me to get better and I was able to learn something new.
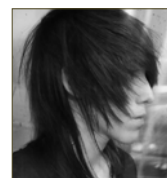

● The painting was finished by adding a Lighten layer on the top

04c

If you decide to paint, experiment and practice regularly, your work is bound to improve. So be patient and don't give up! ●

NEXT MONTH

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———

Film & game artist Fernando Acosta

———

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———

Nature inspired drawings

———

Create a robot exosuit

———

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